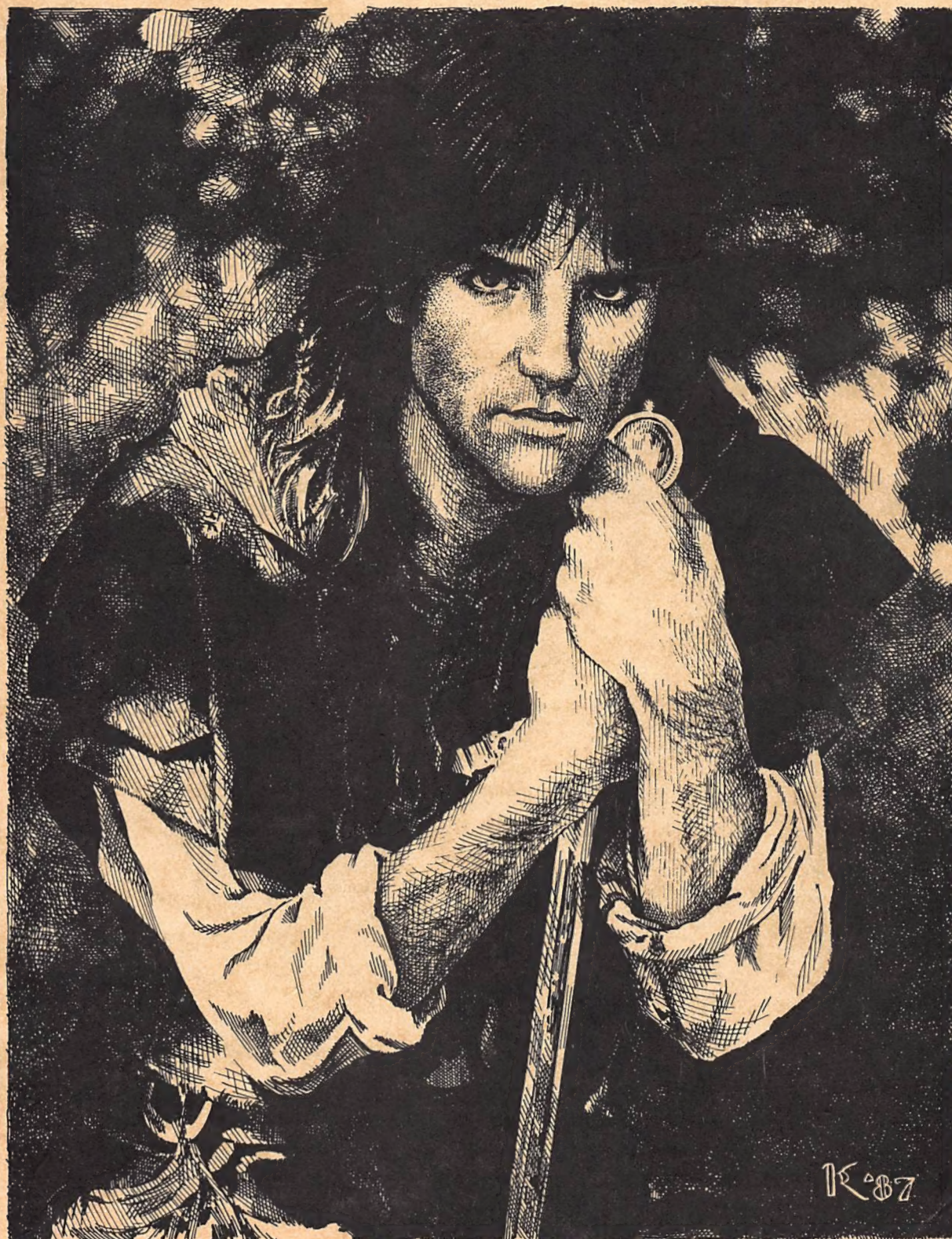


THE
SONIC
SCREWDRIVER

NO. 3



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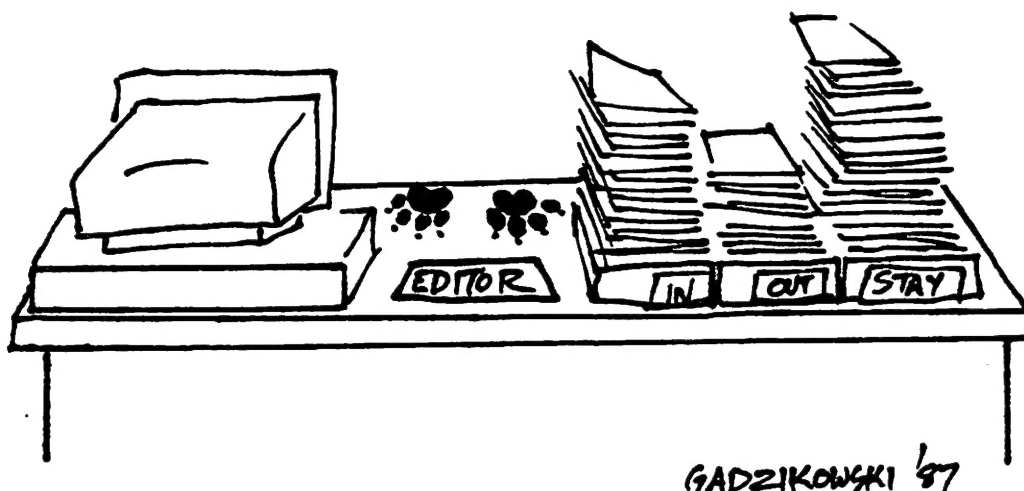
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FROM THE EDITOR: The Fannish Experience

Fandom is a way of life. Or so most new fans are told when they first encounter the phenomenon called "fandom." But what is it, exactly?

Ten years ago, when we first became involved in fandom, we were certain we knew what it meant. It was easy, after all. Fandom was...fans. People. And it didn't matter if two people had absolutely nothing else in common, as long as they were fans.

Science fiction? Fantasy? Role-playing games? Cinema? Television? Yes, they were all part of that larger whole, all part of that wonderful new fannish world. Fans got together at conventions to meet one another, to talk, to share their dreams and wander the realms of their imaginations...

But that was ten years ago, and many things have changed. The world is different now -- and fandom is different, too. It has grown, in both numbers and scope, and it has changed dramatically over the years.

Today, we see the fannish world differently, and in part, at least, the difference is not a good one. For fandom, like so much else around us, has become politics. Wherever people congregate, no matter who they are or what their interests, they engage in the eternal game.

Power. That's what politics is all about. And that, unfortunately, has become as much a part of the fannish experience today as it is of the mundane world.

Are you an avid reader of hard-core science fiction? Then, someone will tell you, you must look down on those who are interested in role-playing games. Is fantasy your principal interest? Then you must dislike purely scientific writing. Literature? Then cinema and television should be anathema to you. Or, conversely, you love a good science fiction film? Then, obviously, you hate all the science fiction literature -- or maybe, as is the sad case in far too much of the

mundane world, you simply cannot read...

And this, we are told, is what fandom today is all about. Someone -- a faceless but influential someone -- dictates a series of neat categories, and all fans must fit tidily into them.

What troubles us most is the number of fans who actually accept this, who go along with the dictates of the politically powerful without ever asking what gives another the right to dictate -- without ever asking why.

We ask it. In fact, we demand an answer.

Isn't it possible for someone to enjoy both good literature and good cinema and television? And why can't one be a fan of both hard-core science fiction and of fantasy?


Who are these influential someones who dare to dictate what -- or who -- a fan can or cannot like? Who are these people who make a mockery of the spirit of fandom so many of us have valued over all these years? Who are these people who have turned fandom into a political arena, in search of their own power and glory?

And who are those who let them do it?

If you are reading these words, you are in all likelihood a fan. That means you are a part of fandom. And it is up to you, as a fan, to stand up to the dictators, the power-seekers. It is up to you to tell them you will no longer meekly follow their rules. It is up to you to say you will believe what you believe, and not what you are told; that you will like what and whom you like, not what and whom someone else likes.

It is up to you to make your own decisions, whatever they may be, and to stand up for them. To do otherwise makes fandom no different at all from that mundane world we so often claim to scorn. If there is anything at all special and unique about fans, it must be this.

For in the end, fandom is fans, not politics. But only if the fans themselves make it so.


---Joy Harrison
Managing Editor



"Soap Opera"

(By Mary Robertson)

PART THE FIRST: BLOWING BUBBLES

Vila Restal muttered dark and dreadful oaths as he sorted through mounds of sweat-stained coveralls and crumpled tunics. Why do I always get stuck with the worst jobs on the ship? Just because I'm the only Delta grade on a spaceship full of suicidal Alphas... Why can't they do their own laundry? What does a thief know about dirty clothes? Besides the fact that I don't like them...?

Vila decided dismally that it was probably part of Blake's master plan to reform him. Keep the thief busy, and he won't have time to raid the medical unit for adrenalin and soma -- or so Blake thought. But it would take more than a few make-work projects to separate this particular little Delta from his favourite drink.

Distracted by notions of thwarting his larger-than-life leader, Vila stuffed a generous number of Blake's shirts into the washing machine. "Why Blake persists in wearing these monstrosities is beyond me," he grumbled, poking at a voluminous sleeve.

He frowned as he reached for a container of concentrated soap tablets. The shirts were filthy. He sometimes thought Blake could find more ways of getting dirty than even Avon, their resident genius, who was always crawling into the machinery on some pretext or other. Well, no need to bother with instructions. Laundry isn't all that difficult. A bit of extra soap will take care of the problem...

Shaking an over-generous supply of tablets onto the shirts, Vila programmed the machine to wash, then settled down for a short nap.

He awoke to a room that was rapidly filling with bubbles. The laundry computer rumbled ominously as soap spewed from its depths, and the bubble level rose at an alarming rate.

Vila jumped up -- and promptly sat down again when his feet slid out from under him on the slippery floor.

Cautiously, he tried once more. Moving like a child on his first set of skates, he inched his way over to the door. It was jammed -- the insidious soap bubbles had shorted out the locking mechanism, and Liberator's sophisticated auto-repair system apparently couldn't work quickly enough to counteract the fast-rising foam. For once, he didn't even have his tools with him -- although how much effect they would have on a broken lock was questionable.

This sort of thing was not supposed to happen. You were supposed to be safe in a laundry room aboard your own ship, after all. Faced with the imminent threat of suffocation by soap bubble, Vila did the only thing he could think of.

"Blake! Avon! Anybody! Help! Let me out of here! They're going to get me! Help!"

On the flight deck, his terrified screech burst at full volume from the communications console, causing Avon to drop a laser probe on his foot.

"What the...?" Blake growled as he spilled half a glass of vitamin tonic down the front of his shirt. "That's Vila."

"Really?" Avon responded archly, nursing his injured extremity.

"Something's wrong. Cally, find out what's happening. Tell him we're on our way. Come on, Avon."

"Must I?" Then, "Oh, very well."

Grabbing weapons from the arsenal, Blake and Avon dashed off to rescue their obviously petrified comrade.

They skidded to a halt in front of the laundry. Avon called Cally in the hope of further clarifying the situation, while Blake tried the door.

"No good, Avon. The mechanism seems to be jammed from the inside."

"Maybe Vila has been experimenting again."

"Then why call us? What did Cally have to say?"

"Nothing. The comm is no longer functional. She cannot raise him." Avon was confused, and didn't like the feeling. If they were dealing with an invasion of some kind, why the laundry? Surely an invasion force would try for the flight deck. This was almost certainly one of Vila's false alarms. He had an amazing imagination when he was drinking. It made no sense otherwise -- unless, Avon decided, Vila's unspecified "they" realized he was easily frightened, and therefore the most vulnerable member of Liberator's crew.

Still, that did nothing to explain this particular location. It was certainly not a place the thief frequented, except under duress. "We will have to blast the door. Out of my way, Blake."

"Right."

Aiming carefully, Avon demolished the malfunctioning controls, while Blake blasted the door. Guns at the ready, they burst in -- or tried to.

Blake went down first, disappearing in a spray of soap. Avon, arms flapping like the wings of some giant black bird, slid halfway across the room before coming up against the sorting table on which Vila perched. The table rocked as Avon, too, disappeared beneath the bubbles.

"Blake?" Vila whimpered, hugging a strut for balance as he scanned the soapy sea around his feet. "Avon? Answer me!"

Blake sputtered and choked as his curly head bobbed to the surface near the laundry computer. "My God, Vila!" he exclaimed between coughs. "What have you done?" Clinging to the machine for dear life, he hauled himself off the floor and jabbed the "CANCEL" button. It was actually becoming

easier to retain his footing, now that some of the slippery froth had escaped into the adjoining corridor, but he wasn't taking any chances. "Where's Avon?" he demanded, still gasping.

Suddenly, Vila's table overturned with a resounding thud, unceremoniously dumping the thief to the floor. Avon's face peered over the wreckage, his hands clutching his head as he groaned and coughed.

"Are you hurt?" Blake took the other man's answering grumble for an affirmative. Then, as Vila emerged from the bubbles, Avon grabbed at him with a snarl. He can't be too seriously damaged...

"Blake? Avon?" Cally called anxiously, peering around the demolished doorway.

"Stay there. It's slippery," commanded the rebel leader, his effectiveness hampered somewhat by both the bubbles emerging from his mouth and the suds dripping into his eyes.

"So it is," she agreed, giggling in spite of herself. Blake's ferocious frown only made her laugh harder. "You should see yourself," she managed to say. Ignoring him, she picked her way over to a stunned-looking Avon. "What happened?" she asked as she examined him for injuries.

Blake offered the explanation. "I think he hit his head on the table."

"Yeah," agreed Vila, "and before that, he..."

"Never mind, Vila!" Avon snarled. His eyes snapped wide open at the sight of the bubbles that accompanied his words, and he groaned.

Vila enjoyed the computer expert's discomfiture immensely -- enjoyed it, that is, until he noticed he was afflicted by the same infirmity. "Oh, no!" he wailed. "Cally?"

She just shook her head. "Try a bit less soap next time."

"Exactly how much soap did you use?" Blake asked, cautiously pushing himself away from his anchor.

The thief shrugged. "About half the container, I guess. Your shirts were awfully dirty..."

"What?" Avon almost made it to his feet before his various aches caught up with him. He staggered. Only Cally's fast reflexes kept him from sliding back into the soapy quagmire. "You, Vila, are an idiot!" he whispered venomously, clinging to the Auron woman's arm. "You were supposed to use one tablet, not one hundred."

"Well, I wasn't to know that, now, was I?" the thief pouted before the other man's ire.

"Didn't you read the instructions?"

"Nobody told me I had to read the instructions. It seemed simple enough, didn't it? How was I to know? I've never done laundry before."

"Never done... Blake!"

The rebel leader winced. I'm in for it now. Avon's not about to let me forget a mistake like this -- but how was I supposed to know Vila's never run a washing machine? He thought everyone knew how to do that.

"Come, Avon," Cally intervened, tugging gently but firmly on her charge. "I will help you. Blake, Vila, I want the two of you in the medical unit as well. You can finish the washing later, Vila."

"Finish the...! Why me? What does a thief know about laundry, anyway?" he muttered, subsiding only when he caught Blake's glare.

"We will teach you," the rebel leader promised. And his voice promised more than a laundry lesson if the thief didn't behave. Slipping a little on the fast-drying soap, he went to Vila's side and hauled him up. "On your feet," he ordered, then growled, "I hope Cally knows how to get rid of these damned bubbles!" as a few of the shimmering orbs floated past.

Shoving the thief before him, he smiled a little. My sense of humour must be returning, he decided, watching Vila rub the nether portion of his anatomy while grimacing ruefully. So he didn't escape unscathed. That fact just might keep Avon from killing him -- maybe. Well, at least we should be safe for now. After all, what else can Vila do to a simple thing like laundry...?

PART THE SECOND: A STIFF UPPER LIP, AMONG OTHER THINGS

"Blake, you simply must do something about... What happened?" Cally stormed onto the flight deck, only to be halted in mid-harangue by the sight of Roj Blake, notorious rebel leader, decked out in a rosy pink pirate shirt. Blake never wore pink. It was contrary to all unwritten rules for rebels.

He looked up with a long-suffering sigh. "Three guesses."

"Vila," she said sympathetically, with an understanding nod.

"Vila," he affirmed. "I suppose you have a problem with the laundry, too?"

In answer, she shook out the dress she carried in her arms and held it up for Blake's inspection.

"There doesn't seem to be... Oh." Grease decorated the skirt in crooked streaks, rendering the white garment virtually unwearable.

"It's ruined," she complained. "What am I supposed to wear to the Resisters and Rebels Ball next week?"

"Look, Cally, I'm sorry about the dress, but Vila will never learn to be responsible if we don't give him anything to be responsible for."

"I know." She sighed. "It's just that this was my favourite..."

"Maybe Jenna can lend you something."

"That could be a problem," replied a feminine voice from the direction of the corridor. Blake turned, to see Jenna in a pink petalled tunic that was much too snug for her lithe form. "Will you look at this, Roj?"

"It would be hard not to." He ogled his beautiful blonde pilot appreciatively, pulling himself back together only with great effort. "Uh, Vila?"

"He shrank my very best top."

"I can see that."

"You want to borrow mine?" Gan rumbled as he came up behind Jenna. "You look better in fringe than I do." His brown tunic hung in neat shreds from oversized shoulders.

Blake rolled his eyes. "Vila strikes again, I see. He's not even consistent. I wonder what he did to Avon."

Cally shuddered. "I'm not sure I want to know. I would not care to be in Vila's shoes right now."

"Why not? Good morning," the thief chirped from the other entryway.

"Vila..." Blake began, fire in his eyes.

"Uh, Blake? What's wrong, Blake?" he squeaked in alarm, backing away as the rebel leader bore down on him, followed by three very angry-looking crew-mates.

"For a start, I don't like pink."

"You never told me that," Jenna interrupted, miffed.

Vila's eyes popped open at the sight of the pilot's skin-tight tunic, and he whistled. It was not a wise move. Blake reached out a hand and grabbed him, much to the hapless thief's dismay.

"If there is any whistling to be done, I will do it. Is that understood?"

"Put him down, Blake," a voice ordered from the deserted entrance. The circle around Vila turned in unison, to see Avon glaring at them.

Blake set the thief back on his feet. "Avon!" he greeted with forced cheerfulness. "We were just commenting on the laundry. Anything to add?"

The computer expert snorted and, without further comment, moved -- slowly and very, very stiffly -- to his work station. Cally's brow crinkled in concern. It was, after all, only a few days since Vila's first abortive attempt at washing, and Avon's subsequent injury. She'd thought he was recovering nicely, but now wasn't so sure. He definitely was not acting normally. Pass up an opportunity to flay Vila? He must be ill...

"Are you well, Avon?" she questioned. "You look..."

"I'm fine, Cally," he snapped. "Just leave me alone." A flashing light on his board drew his attention. Quickly, he leaned forward -- and crackled.

Cally's eyes widened as she realized his problem. "Are you sure you don't have any complaints about the laundry?" she giggled.

Watching her struggle to turn a snicker into a sneeze, Avon knew she knew what was wrong, and gave up any further hope of quietly shoving Vila out the nearest airlock. Turning painfully, he sighed. "Actually, I do. Next time, Vila, please refrain from starching the leather."

PART THE THIRD: WATER SPORTS

Vila grimaced as he surveyed the laundry room. Even with some technical assistance from Avon, it had taken the better part of a week to repair the damages from his first attempt at clothing maintenance -- and another week for Blake to cool down after his second attempt.

Surprisingly, it was Avon who had come to his defence. Considering the man's perpetual state of aggravation, the thief hadn't expected him to be so forgiving -- particularly after he developed a painful skin rash from the starch. So here he was again, stuck in the bowels of Liberator, with orders from Blake to "get it right this time."

Are all geniuses so appallingly grubby? Vila wondered idly, approaching a heap of black leather. Cally's and Jenna's wardrobes weren't half so bad. They both stayed relatively clean most of the time, and as long as he didn't shrink anything or spill grease on the whites, they would be suitably grateful. Working for Cally might even have a few perks, he mused, as a tall glass of adrenalin and soma came to mind. Gan wasn't hard to please, either. And Blake, while his clothes were often filthy, could be placated as long as he wasn't forced to wear any more pink pirate shirts.

Then there was Avon. Their resident computer genius managed to find the filthiest places on the ship. Oil, grease, dust -- you name it, and Avon could and would find it. Leather wasn't exactly the easiest thing in the galaxy to clean, either. It was a good thing the man wore coveralls for the worst jobs.

And Avon did have one other positively infuriating habit. His pockets were invariably filled to overflowing with everything he had simply forgotten to remove -- half-eaten biscuits, bits of wire, laser probes, even ORAC's key. Vila was awed by the variety, wondering if the other man had subjected his mother to an endless string of biology experiment rejects. Computer chips, more likely.

Well, this isn't getting the job done. One more foul-up, and Blake will probably space me without benefit of a trial. It was times like these that made Vila long for the simple life of an incarcerated thief on Cygnus Alpha.

Heaving a resigned sigh, he bent to his task. He had almost finished rifling the computer man's pockets when his expression suddenly turned thoughtful. Then he grinned, and stuffed his prize into his own pocket, his eyes twinkling with devilment. His grin widened when he heard the distinctive sound of Avon's footsteps in the corridor.

"Vila, have you seen...?" Avon burst into the room, pulling up short as the thief pointed to the sorting table.

"Did you lose something?" he inquired guilelessly. At least Avon wasn't armed, he noted. He wouldn't dare even consider teasing the man if he were. That could prove hazardous to a person's continued existence.

With a glare that could melt Liberator's controls at twenty paces, Avon stomped over, and pawed almost desperately through the substantial pile of miscellany. "It's not here," he muttered upon reaching bottom. "Damn!"

"Maybe I can help. What is it you're trying to find?" asked Vila, all wide-eyed innocence.

"Never mind."

"It wouldn't happen to be this, now, would it?" His grin became slightly wicked.

"Give that to me!"

"Not likely," the thief retorted, dangling Jenna's necklace just out of his reach. "Not when I could win sweet Jenna's eternal gratitude for returning it."

"You're delirious."

"Maybe, but I know Blake would be interested to find out you carry Jenna's necklace around with you. Careless, Avon, forgetting it like that."

"Vila," Avon sputtered, "she asked me to fix the clasp for her."

"You, and not Blake?" He shook his head incredulously, enjoying every evil moment. They came so rarely. "I find that hard to believe."

"And what would it take to eliminate your doubts?" The computer expert played along, amused that the thief would stoop to blackmail, even in fun, and curious to see just how far he intended to go.

Vila considered. The other man was in an unusually congenial mood, and he didn't want to push him too far. Still, if there was a chance of benefitting... "Hmm..." he said aloud. "I think a month without laundry duty would just about do it."

Avon thought it might be something like that. "You realize, of course, that it is simply your word against mine, and chances are that Blake will take mine."

"Y-yes." Vila backed off a step. He wanted plenty of room to run if things turned violent. Teasing Avon was rewarding after a fashion, but it was a bit like stroking a cat. You never knew if it would purr or bite your hand off.

"And, at the end of the month, you will return the necklace to me?" the computer man continued, pretending not to notice his companion's increasing discomfort.

"Uh-huh."

"Very well." The whole incident struck him as humorous. Vila could be a most determined man when it came to avoiding work. At least, if he did his own laundry, he wouldn't have to put up with the atrocities to which Vila had subjected his clothing thus far. Jenna's weren't the only garments that were tight. Besides, he had an idea. "You have a bargain, Vila."

"I...I do?" The thief was flabbergasted. He had never expected Avon to cooperate.

"Yes, you do." It was almost worth a month's laundry duty just to watch the man's face. "But I want it in writing."

"What?"

"We will, of course, need a witness. This must be done properly, after all. I think, under the circumstances, that Jenna will be most appropriate."

"Bu-but, Avon...!"

"What's wrong, Vila?"

"She'll kill me!"

"Why should she?" It was the other man's turn to affect wide-eyed innocence. "You did find the necklace in my possession. Shall we go?"

"Uh, Avon?"

"Yes?"

"I, uh, have to finish the wash first."

PART THE FOURTH: SPIN CYCLE

Avon hummed to himself, pleased, as he sorted through the piles of crinkled coveralls and grimy shirts. He could hear Vila bouncing down the corridor, and he was ready.

"Like your new job, Avon?" the thief crowed as he peered through the doorway, ready to duck if the other man decided to throw anything potentially lethal.

"It has proven to be most amusing," he conceded with an enigmatic smile. "Did you bring me your contributions?"

"Right here." He deposited his bundle on the floor and parked himself on the sorting table, gloating as Avon hoped he would. "I thought I'd stay a bit, to offer you the benefit of my vast experience, since you've never done this before."

The computer man's eyebrows rose, and he choked back a laugh. "I prefer showers to bubble baths," he said drily as he bent over the untidy heap. He devoted only half an ear to the thief's prattle, listening instead to the silence in the corridor beyond. Finally, he recognized Blake's heavy tread.

"Avon, what's going on? Jenna said you were down here doing the wash, but I didn't believe her. I thought Vila was..." The rebel leader stopped abruptly when he noticed what Avon was extricating from a sleeve of Vila's robe. "That's Jenna's," he stated, his voice like a rumble of distant thunder.

"It is?" Avon was the picture of confusion as he dangled the scanty night-wear from one finger.

"Rather small, don't you think?"

"Never mind." Snatching the offending garment, Blake bore down on the hapless and decidedly confused Vila. "What were you doing with this?" he demanded.

"Bu-but, I've never seen it before! Honest, Blake! Tell him, Avon. Avon? Oh, help!" the thief wailed, searching in vain for a safe place to hide for, say, the next hundred years or so. I'm doomed. Blake will tear me limb from limb... I should have known better than to try and blackmail Avon. I should have known...

Revenge is sweet, Avon thought as he slipped quietly from the scene of impending mayhem. Maybe I'll go back in a few minutes, and rescue Vila. Then again, maybe I won't... He'd have to think about it.

Yes, revenge was sweet -- particularly when her name was Jenna.





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2. Written material should be neatly typed on $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ white paper, double-spaced. Only one side of the page should be used, and all pages must be numbered. Hand-written or hand-printed manuscripts will be accepted only at the discretion of the editor; these should be double-spaced on $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ lined paper. The editorial staff reserves the right to reject any manuscript not deemed to be sufficiently legible.
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8. While decisions of the editorial staff are generally to be considered final, any contributor wishing to discuss an editorial decision is free to do so, and a decision may be reversed if the contributor can provide adequate support for such a change.

"Darkly Dreaming"

(By Barbara Mater)

Inside the cage, it was warm and bright. An unseen source played soft music, and richly coloured velvet curtains in shades of blue, red, and violet draped the walls. A huge mirror in an ornate gilded frame hung against the wall opposite the door; as she lay on a mound of sweetly-perfumed purple satin cushions, Perl gazed into it. Her face -- lovely, young, shining with happiness -- looked back from the glass. She preened before her image, arranging the blue silk of her long gown around her shoulders, pouting, flirting with her reflection, playing with her hair. She turned this way and that, admiring herself, unaware of two people who watched from outside.

One was the Doctor.

"Come along, Perl," he called impatiently. "Can't be anything that interesting in there."

"But, Doctor, this is such a pretty room. It's warm, and everything's so pretty, and I just love the way I feel, with all this colour... And the music, hear the music?" She sighed. "I love the way I look, too, don't you?"

The Time Lord frowned. There was no denying Perl was very nice to look at, but she was certainly not at her best right now. From where he stood, just at the foot of the little rise on which the cage perched, he could see only iron bars hung with dirty canvas. A raspy rattling, as of rusty sherds of metal scraping together, sounded from within, and he climbed closer to look inside. Through a gap in the hangings, he glimpsed straw on a concrete floor, an old torn mattress with the cotton stuffing falling out, and some dirty rags the girl had wrapped around herself -- to keep out the cold wind that whined incessantly through these hills, he thought.



The most ominous object in the cage was the video screen that inexplicably hung on the wall. Peri's face, as she gazed at the screen, was dirty, and there were dark circles under her eyes from lack of sleep. She must have spent as bad a night as he had.

He shuddered as he thought of that night. The TARDIS had chugged to a halt after a difficult journey, thrown off course -- he wasn't sure whether by unknown forces or by mechanical malfunction. At first, he was relieved they had materialized at all, let alone on a solid planetary surface. But after they went out to investigate, he began to doubt his good fortune. It was twilight, and they had no way of guessing how long the coming night would last.

They climbed a hill for a better view, and saw only more hills, and more beyond them, all covered with patchy wild grasses and occasional groves of trees. Here and there, rocks jutted out from the ground; here and there, they saw the tell-tale bright green of marshes. Birds called in the air, sounding something like rooks flying home at evening. Things moved in the trees, rustling, cautious.

They saw no people. It was getting dark, and the Doctor said, "It's better to go back to the TARDIS now. We can explore in the morning."

But Peri had already reached the bottom of the hill, and pointed off into the distance. "Look, Doctor, there's a light over there. Let's go and see what it is."

"No, Peri, come with me."

"Oh, come on, don't be a spoil-sport."

He followed her, anxious that she might stray into a marshy spot and sink out of sight, or be attacked by whatever was in the trees. But she had a good head start, and the ground was uneven. It was hard going in the dark, and it took him a while to catch up to her.

She walked on, passing between two hills and coming up to this level spot, and went into the trap.

He was sure now that it was a trap, and that it had been set purposely to catch humans. But by whom, and for what reason?

The Doctor walked around to the back of the cage, which was about five metres on a side, and found it backed up into a hillside. No getting in or out that way... The only door seemed to be the one at the top of the exterior ramp; she had shut that behind her. There was no handle on the outside of the door, and when he pushed against it, it didn't move. As he was about to try climbing through the bars, a sudden surge of electricity went through them, and he felt his hands vibrate and clutch involuntarily at the burning metal. Then he was thrown clear, tumbling backward to the ground below.

He landed hard. An ordinary man would have had the wind knocked out of him, but not the Doctor. He was back on his feet in an instant, staring around him. He saw only blackness. His hands were cramped, his arms stiff. He tried to move his fingers, and couldn't.

Closing his eyes, he began the mantric breathing he knew would restore his circulation and neural functioning. After only a couple of breaths, he was seized from behind by something large and odiferous, with long hairy arms that lifted him like a child and carried him off. Oh, no! Not a Yeti! This doesn't even look like the Himalayas...

Of course, it wasn't the Himalayas, and it wasn't a Yeti -- or at least, not an Earth-type one -- but a curious large ape native to the nameless world the TARDIS had landed upon. The ape took its time carrying the Time Lord away, and he had a very uncomfortable ride. Jouncing along through the night, he gagged at the rank odour of the beast and struggled to get away, but the creature held him fast. It stopped occasionally to snatch an insect from the air and devour it, or to pluck fruit as they passed through a grove of trees.

The Doctor tried to communicate with the animal in every language he could think of, but to no avail. Its mind wasn't even open to telepathic exchanges, although the Time Lord sensed it was more curious than hungry, for which he was glad, although he had never yet met apes that would eat warm-blooded creatures.

After some time, they arrived in the top of a tree, where a female ape nestled in the branches with her baby, resting quietly. She made grunting noises to the male, who answered her with muttering and gestures, poking the Doctor and turning him around to show her.

She tugged at the Time Lord's coat, tracing the borders of the coloured patches with her fingers. Her night vision must be very good; the Doctor couldn't see the colours himself.

The apes made him stay in the tree with them all night, although they did nothing to injure him. He couldn't sleep for fear of falling. When the beasts slept, he tried to make his escape, but the female awoke and with some annoyance pushed him back into his place between herself and her mate.

In the morning, the male ape went out to look for food, first grunting some sort of instruction or admonition to the Doctor. The female was occupied with her baby, and the Doctor quietly climbed down out of the tree. He hoped they wouldn't be able to find him by his scent -- which, he suspected, was by then somewhat like their own.



He wandered around uncertainly. The terrain was so similar everywhere that he could see it would be hard to get any bearings. After a while, he spotted the TARDIS; from there, he could see which way Peri had gone. He checked inside the ship first, but she wasn't there. Alert for giant apes, he went looking for her.

* * * * *

Someone else kept a close eye on Peri.

He watched her in the monitor as she awakened on the mattress, stretching luxuriously, tossing her hair and smiling with her eyes shut, oblivious to the cold that made her body shake and her teeth chatter. She believes she is lovely and happy. She must continue to believe that. Soon, she will be convinced I am the source of her beauty and happiness...

He folded his arms across the front of his high-collared grey jacket, his silver hair bright under the fluorescent lights in the hillside bunker, his blue eyes gleaming, a thin sardonic smile on his lips.

Outside, the Doctor called to her again. "Peri! It's not such a good place as you think! How can you enjoy the cold, the hard floor, the dirt? Please, come with me!"

"Oh, Doctor, you can be such a pest. It's very nice. Listen, I'm really hungry. Why don't you go get some food and bring it to me?"

"I should think you're hungry! Cold, too, no doubt, and you don't look as if you've slept any more than I have. Come on out. We'll be fine in the TARDIS."

"I'm fine right here! Now, how about finding us some breakfast?"

That was the first sensible thing she'd said. But why does she like that cage so much? "Listen, Peri, has someone hypnotized you? What went on in there overnight?"

She finally looked at him, but ignored his question. "Breakfast, Doctor?"

At least it would give him an excuse to get into the cage, where he could talk to her face to face. The Time Lord went to a nearby grove of trees to pick some fruit, hoping he wouldn't meet one of the apes again.

While he was gone, the American girl had a visitor. She was sitting on her soft cushions, swaying in time to the sweet, lovely music, staring unseeingly at the bright blues and reds and violets of the thick drapes. Then, there he was, standing beside her, with his air of benevolent authority.

"Hello, Peri."

"Hello." She smiled, for he seemed to belong in this delightful room, and to be the most charming and pleasant companion she could meet. "Who are you?"

"In some places, I am called Kraft. I hope you are enjoying my hospitality."

"Oh, it's perfect. Nothing could be better, Mr. Kraft. I feel so lucky to have found this place."

"Oh, it was not luck that brought you here. No, this room was made just for you, Peri. I have been waiting a long time for you to come here."

"For me? But why? How did you know about me in the first...?"

He gestured for her to be quiet. "I know about you because it is my way to know about people. And this has all been arranged to make you happy."

She frowned, just the tiniest little frown, for nothing could be so bad as to disturb her here amidst all this beauty. She tried to remember what it had been like before she came here. It seemed so long ago, but still... "I think I was pretty happy already. There was someone... The Doctor... He was sort of strange, sometimes, and he didn't always look the same, either, but he was very special to me. I think... It's all sort of faded now, like it wasn't real, but I think it was."

Kraft was not pleased. "The Doctor?" He glared at her. "You think you knew someone called the Doctor? What sort of name do you call that? And what sort of person? And where is he now? Too busy for you, is he?"

"No, he...he will come back, I'm sure he will." But she didn't sound sure. Her happiness was wavering. She didn't want it to be spoiled; she wanted to feel happy again. "Is something wrong?" she asked fearfully.

"Of course not," her visitor reassured her. "Everything is perfectly fine, as long as you stay here."

She reached out to touch him, to lean on him. He caught hold of her wrist and, with his other hand, held her chin steady. He stared into her eyes. "Trust me." He spoke softly, slowly, still staring into her eyes; he did not smile. "Take all the time you need to trust me."

"Peri!" the Doctor called. "Here, I've brought you something to eat!"

She couldn't look at him. She couldn't look away from Kraft. "It's all right now, Doctor," she said. "I don't need anything any more." The stranger let go of her, nodding his approval.

The Time Lord peered through the gap in the



filthy canvas. His companion stood in the middle of the bare cell-like cage, face to face with a strange man. "Who's that?" he asked.

"It's all right, Doctor," she said. "He's a friend. Won't you come in and meet him?"

"Well, would you like to let me in?" If she could open the door. At least he would know that much.

"Yes, why didn't I think of that?" she answered, delighted. "You can come in here and stay with me!" She went to the beautifully painted door, took hold of the handle, and pushed it open.

The Doctor stood back as the rusty iron door swung outward, then slipped quickly inside before she could change her mind. He looked around for her companion; he was nowhere to be seen.

"Here's your breakfast," the Time Lord said, handing her a branch heavily laden with red, sweet-tasting berries. "Where's that fellow gone who was here with you?"

"Do you mean Kraft? I don't know. He got in without my seeing him, too. Oh, Doctor, he's so wonderful. He made all this just for me." She smiled, and gestured around the cage.

"Did he, now? I wonder why. What do you think, Peri?" He examined the room. It was still dirty, cold, and bare, and the raspy metal sound was quite loud. She must be seeing a powerful illusion of some kind. If only I could determine its origin! The obvious answer was the video screen, which she gazed into as if it were a mirror. It was unlit; perhaps it operated only intermittently. He could see no controls.

"He said he wants me to be happy. And I am, Doctor! If only I could tell you how happy!" She beamed at him. Her lips looked dry and cracked, but she didn't even taste the juicy berries. Instead, she pinched them one by one, rubbing the red juice on her cheeks and forehead like cosmetics, gazing into the mirror as if in love with her own face.

"Peri, what are you doing? Stop that this minute, and act like...like yourself."

"What do you mean, Doctor? Don't you want to see me looking nice? Oh, no, not you. You never cared if I was happy, did you? No, all you ever wanted to do was fight monsters and chase bad guys. Never mind if Peri has any fun, just so long as you get to be the big hero, right? Well, let me tell you, I've had enough. I've met somebody who wants me to be happy, and I'm going to stay right here, and I don't need you any more, so you can just go back to your old TARDIS and go flying off into space and get yourself into more trouble, and this time, you can do it without me!"

"Peri..." He put a friendly arm around her shoulders. "None of this is real, can't you see?" She stared into the mirror, smugly admiring her imaginary reflection. "You can't see, can you? Will you just look at me? Please?"

She did, but it was a look of defiance.

"Of course, I want you to be happy," he said earnestly. "Of course, I do. But you can't find happiness in an illusion. It may be fun for a while, but it's no way to live. You have to face reality. Was our reality so very bad, hmm?"

She looked away again.



He sighed. "Well, I guess it did have some rough spots. But it was real, Perl. It was us, really living. If you're tired of travelling with me, I'll take you home. It won't be the first time I've had to do something like that. But I can't leave you here, in this...prison!"

She curled up on the mattress, humming to herself with her eyes closed, oblivious to him. Her bare arms were covered with goose-flesh, and she coughed, interrupting her song, but she didn't open her eyes. The Time Lord took off his coat and spread it over her, then left the cage, wedging the door slightly open with the branch from the berries.

He went around the hill. There has to be another way into the cage, and somewhere, there have to be controls for the video screen...

The other side of the hill was steeper, marked by huge rocks poking out of the ground. After some searching, he found a cave among the rocks. It seemed to back into the hill; he went inside.

Something smelled bad -- sort of doggy, but sharper. He wondered what it was. The darkness was deep. At first, he felt his way along the walls with his hands, stumbling a couple of times, waiting until he could see.

Eventually, he could just make out a darker shape ahead of him in the tunnel. It seemed to move, and then, suddenly, it was upon him, clawing and tearing, hot breath on his face, huge paws stamping on his body. He tried to cover his face with one hand, hugging the wall of the cave as he scrambled toward the entrance, but the thing had its teeth in his ear and wouldn't let go, viciously tugging his head to and fro.

He clenched his teeth against the pain, and heard something whirr past him to strike hard on flesh nearby. He staggered forward again, suddenly free, and saw the apes in the tunnel entrance, rocks in their fists.

They pushed past him, rushing in to meet his attacker. It howled as more rocks found their marks, then there was a scuffle, and a loud cracking sound, like a tree limb breaking. The apes emerged moments later, carrying the body of a large, long-fanged wolf-like creature. The head lolled back at an unnatural angle; they had broken its neck.

The Doctor leaned on the rocks, holding his breath against the pain that seized the right side of his head. Gingerly, he touched his ear. It was still there, but ripped and bleeding.

The she-ape approached him unhurriedly, looked at his ear, and sniffed it. For just a moment, he was afraid she, too, would bite him, but she didn't touch him. Instead, she grunted, pointing to a spring of clear water a little way up the hill. Then she and her mate were off with their trophy, the baby ape still clinging contentedly to his mother's short, hairy neck.

The Time Lord went to the spring and washed his head, then sat a few moments and caught his breath. When the pain subsided somewhat, he began to think again. If the tunnel does lead through the hill to the controls of the screen, what was a wolf doing in it?

* * * * *

Perl awoke to find Kraft standing nearby, watching her as though deep in thought. He said nothing as she shook her head and sat up. Hunger and fatigue were making her dizzy, but as soon as she saw Kraft, she didn't mind. Here was her friend, her host, who brought her such happiness that

nothing else mattered. He will take care of me...

She stood, wavering on her feet, and reached for him to steady herself. He took her hand, and her mind was his. "What's this?" he asked quietly, touching the Doctor's coat, which she wore loosely wrapped around her shoulders.

"The Doctor was here. He left me his coat."

"He was here? How did he get in?"

"I let him in."

"You should not have done that. This room is yours, Peri. Anyone else coming in might spoil it."

"But he won't spoil anything. The Doctor's okay. He just thought I might be cold, so he left me his coat." She didn't feel the icy gusts that stirred the curtains, nor was she aware of the abrasions on her legs caused by lying half off the mattress on the straw-covered floor. "He brought me some berries, too. Don't they look nice on me?" She lifted her face to Kraft for his approval.

"You are enjoying the mirror and the room, are you not, Peri? I think you need a good long rest, and you shall have it here. But the Doctor must not come in any more. Do you understand that?"

"How can I keep him out?"

"That is very simple. Just do not open the door."

"But he asks me so nicely, and we're old friends, don't you see?"

"I am your friend now, Peri. Has he ever done anything like this for you?" He gestured around the cage.

She looked uncertain. The Doctor had never given her anything like this, but he had proven himself a friend many times. "Are you really my friend?"

"How can you doubt me?" He dropped her hand, and turned away. "If you are not pleased with your room, and you would like to go, the door is not locked." And he walked away, disappearing through the curtains beside the mirror.

* * * * *

The Doctor had gathered some dry grass and a bundle of sticks. He took a small magnifying glass from his pocket; focussing the sun's rays on the grass, he made a small fire. When the sticks caught, he took hold of the end of the bundle and started back into the cave. Now, at least, he could see.

He followed the narrow, twisting tunnel deep into the hill, walking as quietly as he could over the rough floor. The makeshift torch was smoky and flickered constantly, and he bumped into the rocks a few times. Once, he struck his head, which began to throb again. He thought of going back...

No! I'm a Time Lord. I can handle anything. I have to get Peri free, and to do that, I have to

find out how Kraft is working on her...

He reached the end of the tunnel just as the torch went out. There was a heavy door across the passage. He felt all over it for a knob or handle, but found none. It held when he gave it a little shove. He was preparing to crash into it when it opened by itself.

The chamber inside was hollowed from the rocky earth, shored up by timbers, and damp underfoot. A stream of water ran down one wall, turned a water-wheel that screeched rustily -- Peri's "music," no doubt -- then disappeared into a hole in the floor. This must be under the spring the ape showed me...

Arrayed across the centre of the room, on some sort of platform to keep them dry, were a computer, a small generator connected to the water-wheel, and several other scientific instruments, including a large, old-fashioned tape drive in a cabinet the size of a wardrobe. Heavy cables led from a bench-top console decked with gauges and lights and a row of push buttons to a channel leading through the earthen wall over the opposite door -- the door that must open into the cage.

That door opened, and Kraft stepped in. "Ah, Doctor. I have been expecting you."

"Have you?" The Time Lord's voice was heavy with irony.

"Peri has been telling me about her great friend, the Doctor, who wants to take her away from me. It hardly seems a fair thing to do, Doctor. Surely, she should be able to associate with whom she pleases."

"Fair? Is what you've done to her fair? She's in some sort of trance, thinks that cell out there is somebody's best room, sits gazing into your video monitor as if it were a mirror and she a prima donna. She's tired, and cold, and hungry, and very possibly sick, too, and she doesn't even know it. Don't talk to me about fair, Kraft!"

"Are you jealous because she prefers to stay here as my...guest?"

"How can you say what she prefers? If she were in her right mind, she'd go with me in a minute. I've never tried to charm her, but I've never lied to her, either. I think these machines have something to do with your hypnotic powers, haven't they?" He rested one hand on the console from which the cables emerged, studying the indicators, and reached for a push button.

"If you really value her, Doctor, do not play with that." Kraft moved to stand beside the Time Lord. "That is a nasty wound you have there. What happened?"

"I met your dog, and he lacked your good manners."

"Indeed?" A flicker of concern showed momentarily on the other man's suave countenance. "Where is he now?"

"You'll have to ask the apes." He sighed impatiently. "Look here, I'm not going to play your game, you know. Whatever it is you want with Peri, I think you'd better tell me plainly. I'm not susceptible to hypnosis or flattery. What do these machines do?"

"Ah, Doctor, I shall be happy to explain. This, of course, is my processing unit." He patted the computer. "And this is information storage -- in Peri's case, not a great deal of information, only her likes and dislikes as far as I have been able to ascertain them. This," he pointed to

the wired console, "controls what you call the video screen, with all its various effects. Put them together, and they become the Narcissus Machine." He kept his face expressionless, but a note of pride crept into his voice.

"I thought so. But the Narcissus Project was abandoned when the Time Lords discovered the scientist in charge was using the machine to enslave his fellow citizens. It was ordered destroyed, and the man in charge was transferred to a mental position on Gallifrey. He is still there. That alone proves that, whoever you are, you did not come by this device honestly. You stole it, didn't you?"

Kraft looked faintly distressed. "I salvaged the components. Too precious to waste, an invention like this. Would you care to see a demonstration?"

"No, I would not, and you're not going to use that thing on Peri again!"

But before the Time Lord could stop him, Kraft switched the machine on. A small monitor on top of it lit up, and by the time the Doctor reached the machine, Peri's face had appeared on the computer screen. She was coughing again, and brushing her hair back from her face. Her warm smile had become a dreadful grimace. Her eyes were dark with fatigue, her cheeks and forehead smeared with red berry juice. Her hair was dirty and full of straw. But she didn't notice at all, and began contentedly preening again.

"You see, Doctor? It is not I, but her own vanity, which keeps her here. And it is her own vanity, her own longing for beauty and happiness, that will keep her here. When she learns to trust me, nothing will release her, and then she will obey me in all things. You will have lost an ally, and I will have gained one."

"Vanity of vanities," said the Doctor thoughtfully, staring at the girl. "Poor Peri. How does the machine do that to her?"

"I have merely recorded the feelings of pleasure she experienced when she entered the room, including her self-esteem. Now, when her mind begins to be troubled, I play them back at an amplified level, and she is happy again."

"But the illusion itself, how does that work?"

"A simple holographic projection, accompanied by a whiff of tranquilizer gas. Quite ingenious, if I do say so."

The Doctor was stalling for time, looking around for something to use to sabotage the machine. As Kraft answered him, he found what he was looking for. He reached in front of the other man to push him aside.

Kraft was ready for him, and they grappled, the Time Lord trying to force his opponent away from the machine while Kraft attempted to push him to the floor. For a moment, the Doctor appeared to be winning. Then he tripped on the edge of the platform and fell.

He rolled over, and reached into a corner of the cave for a miner's pick Kraft must have left there. He went back toward the platform with it.

His foe picked up a weapon of his own. "This is what I used to control the wolf," he said. He raised his hand and cracked the long whip he held, barely missing the Doctor, who was already

moving, circling the platform, looking for his chance to get to the machine. "The animals here proved not to respond to my machine, but I needed their cooperation, and I knew I would also need them when you came." He smiled his thin, sardonic smile, and cracked the whip again, this time nearly catching the Time Lord. "You see, I have been expecting you for some time."

The Doctor kept circling, placing the generator hook-up between himself and Kraft, staying on the side nearest the Narcissus Machine. He swiped at the hook-up with his pick, chopping the cable neatly in two, and the lights began to fade. "I suppose you have," he said. "And now, I know who you are."

Then he raised the miner's pick again, as Kraft braced for another strike, and brought it down hard on the console, smashing the monitor, knocking a gauge loose, severing a second cable. Sparks flew. The cave was plunged into darkness.

The Time Lord made his way quickly to the door of the cage, not stopping to worry about Kraft. Peri huddled in front of the video screen, crying. She looked up when he came in. "Oh, Doctor, it was all a lie! It's not beautiful at all!" She began to cry again.

"It's all right, Peri," he said, helping her up. "It's all right now."

The door to the cave was ajar. Light flared as Kraft turned on an electric torch. "You have ruined it!" he said furiously. "It was the only one of its kind, and now it is useless! You have beaten me once more, Doctor, but we will meet again!" He swung open the back of the tape drive cabinet and stepped inside. The panel shut behind him, and Peri, clinging to the Doctor, heard the sound of a TARDIS dematerializing.

* * * * *

Back in the Doctor's TARDIS, the Time Lord and his bedraggled companion sat on a bench in the control room. Peri looked into a real mirror. "Yuck! What a mess! How did I get like this?"

"Are your memories of Kraft and his cage already fading?" The Doctor smiled. "Perhaps that's just as well. But don't forget completely. That way, he can't fool you again."

"What makes you think he'll get another chance?"

"Oh, he's always lurking around somewhere. Keeps showing up when you least expect him. I knew he had to be a Time Lord when I realized he was using the Narcissus Machine. And there's only one Time Lord who hates me enough to try to hurt you, Peri.

"The Master."



"Turning Point"

(By Marcia Brin)



A drink, barely tasted, sat unnoticed on the table as the man brooded in the darkness. Moonlight, filtering through the window, provided the only illumination. The pale light reflected off his striking platinum-coloured hair; the rest of him was lost in the shadows and the silence.

Silence. It had been so silent when he returned. At first, it didn't concern him; it was, after all, 3:30 A.M. She had probably gone to bed long ago, and the baby always slept well. But by the time he finished hanging up his coat and placing his papers in the wall safe, he had begun to feel there was something wrong. The silence had a strangely empty feel to it...

Suddenly afraid, he raced upstairs, but their room was empty. The bed and the crib -- neither even slept in.

As he reached for the telephone, an envelope caught his eye. He stared at it for several minutes, while an invisible vise squeezed at his chest. Then, slowly, reluctantly, he reached for the letter.

He still held it in his hand as he sat alone, staring blindly into the darkness. He couldn't blame her for leaving. What kind of life did we have this past year, our first together? For him, endless work getting S.H.A.D.O. on its feet; for her, endless lonely days and nights. Worse, he was never able to discuss his work with her, tell her what he was doing. Her parents suspected him of infidelity, even to the point of hiring an investigator, who was able to get pictures of him with several different women.

Damn it, many of my subordinates are women...! He had no patience with male supremacists -- but he wasn't able to tell her that. Although she had thrown the report away and staunchly defended him to her family, his continued silence undoubtedly nurtured the seeds her parents had planted.

There was little point in going after her. What could he offer that would be different? We'd both know nothing would change...

God, he had had no idea how much this job would demand of him, back when it was first offered to him a year ago. If he had, he might have refused it. It was offered on the recommendation of his then-superior officer, General Henderson. He himself was a colonel in Army Intelligence, and part of the team that had collected data on the invasion. After surviving an ambush by the aliens, he found himself being proffered the position of Commander-in-Chief, S.H.A.D.O. Field Operations. Henderson, who was to become military liaison and head of the financial operation, urged him to accept it.

Now I know why Henderson wanted me to take the job so badly. Bitterness swept over him as he sat alone, her letter in his hand, remembering that afternoon's meeting. Like all the others, actually, but I finally understood...

All-hail-and-well-met Ed Straker. Astronaut, astrophysicist, army officer. A brilliant mind, a

good soldier. Obedient -- like all good soldiers. Deferring to superiors. Henderson counted on that, damn him! The former general, entirely removed from the work and sometimes dirty business of S.H.A.D.O., untouched by the responsibility of the command, still expected to give orders to his erstwhile subordinate. Command without the heartache...

And for a year, he got away with it...

Straker suddenly surged to his feet, unconsciously crushing the letter in one fist. No more! By God, no more! He was Commander-in-Chief, not Henderson. He was no longer Henderson's subordinate, and it was time the ex-general learned that.

If he had to pay such a heavy price because of his commitment to S.H.A.D.O.'s battle, then he would run that battle. If he had the responsibility for the consequences of decisions made on S.H.A.D.O.'s behalf, then, damn it, he would make those decisions.

He had been used by Henderson -- but never again.

There would be only one Commander at S.H.A.D.O. -- and whatever that required, he would become. Up to now, the scope of the job had frightened him a little, but no more. If S.H.A.D.O. needed a giant, then he would be a giant.

Carefully, he again opened the letter, and smoothed out the pages. He couldn't fight her going. He had committed himself to S.H.A.D.O.'s fight, to the defence of a planet, and it left him nothing for her -- or for anyone else.

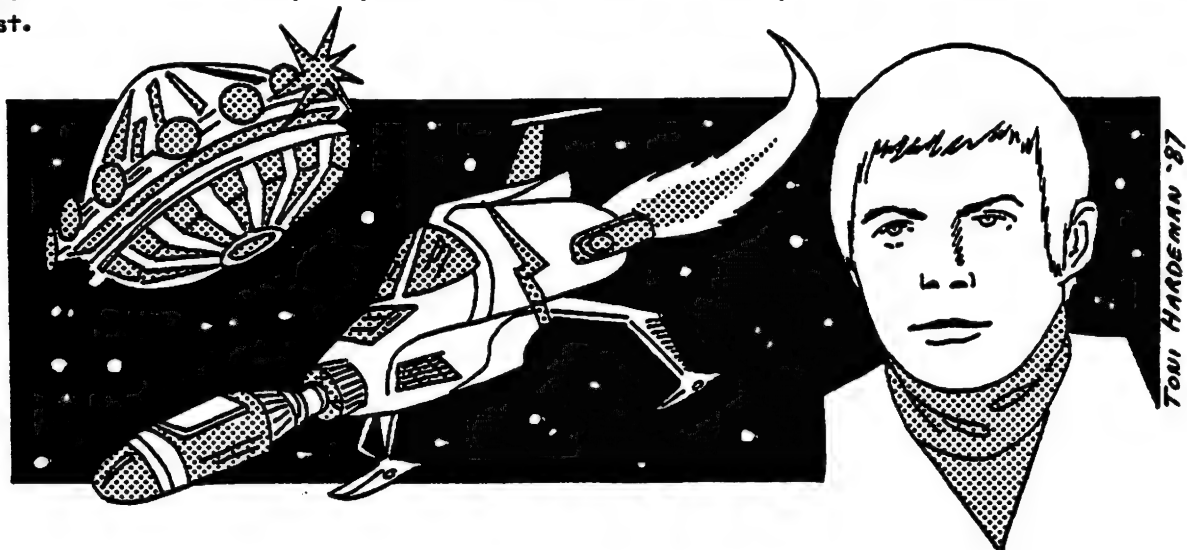
There was no going back. If I have to walk alone, so be it. But it will be by my choice, and for my organisation...

It could not be shared, this burden of command, not even by his friends. Such a sharing would cripple the organisation. Nor could he be a "pal" -- "good old Ed Straker." That man had to pass away like the dinosaurs. Too many tough, mean, dirty decisions had to be made in the vicious fight ahead. He had to stand alone, unapproachable, in the centre of the great web that was S.H.A.D.O.

And he would hold to his commitment. S.H.A.D.O. left him nothing else.

Command would speak with one voice -- and it would be a tough one. And it would be his.

A short while later, his mouth grim, his eyes already growing ice-hard, he left the silent, empty house forever. And left, too, Colonel Ed Straker, as nothing more than a fading image from his past.



TO THE RATIONAL MIND...

(By Paul Gadzikowski)

Since 1963, when he first appeared, the Doctor has been a figure of mystery. Over the years, many of the questions surrounding him have been answered, but the answers have almost always led to more questions. For many of the series' fans, the consideration of all these questions is the most interesting aspect of the program.

In the first issue of THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER, I held forth at some length on many of these questions. Reader response has been favourable -- but unspecific. No one has yet written in to say, "No, you're wrong, and here's why!" or, "You forgot about something when you said that!" or even, "That's brilliant -- but how do you explain this?"

Nevertheless, through discussion with fellow fans, I am usually adding to or correcting those discussions and arguments myself. I will continue to share them as long as people find them entertaining.

Following are some new thoughts and ideas about DOCTOR WHO and the DOCTOR WHO universe.

In THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #1, I discuss a theory held by many fans -- that the meddling Monk (The Time Meddler, The Dalek Master Plan) and the War Chief (The War Games), both Time Lords met and opposed by the Doctor before his third regeneration, might be previous incarnations of the Master. However, the War Chief's dialogue in The War Games makes it evident that this is the first time he has met the Doctor since the Doctor initially left Gallifrey. Therefore, he and the Monk cannot be the same person, and if either is the Master, the other cannot be. The War Chief seems more likely to be the Master; the Monk, who in The Time Meddler misguidedly tries to improve Earth's history with his meddling, is not evil per se.

By the way, the use of the term "regeneration" as a synonym for "incarnation" is not proper English on either side of the Atlantic. However, the Doctor and other Time Lords do it often enough that one must assume the usage is the closest possible English translation of a Gallifreyan term.

Back to THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #1. I present an argument giving the Doctor's age as seven hundred sixty Gallifreyan years during the "Key to Time" story series -- Gallifreyan years being a hundred or a thousand times longer than Earth years. In Revelation of the Daleks, the Time Lord tells Peri he is nine hundred years old. For him to age from seven hundred sixty Gallifreyan years during the "Key to Time" quest to nine hundred years in Revelation of the Daleks, I postulate that ninety-nine percent of the time would have to occur before Adric joins the TARDIS crew.

You see, before Adric arrives, the Doctor's only travelling companions are Romana and K-9 -- another Time Lord and a machine, neither of whom would necessarily show the effects of a hundred fifty Gallifreyan years any more than he would himself. But from that point until his claim of nine hundred years, the Doctor's travelling companions are all Terrans or aliens who age -- or so,

by default, we assume -- at a rate closer to ours than to Gallifreyans'.

But what if the aliens don't? It's possible Alzarians, like Gallifreyans, are long-lived, although unlikely; their phenomenally rapid healing rate indicates a phenomenally high metabolism, which doesn't lend itself to long life. Still, none -- or no significant amount -- of the Doctor's aging is likely to occur while he travels with Romana, K-9, and Adric between Full Circle and Logopolis, because all those stories lead right from one into the next.

Also, none of the Doctor's aging is likely to occur while he travels with Adric, Nyssa, and Tegan between Logopolis and Timeflight, because the human Tegan ages only about one Terran year during that time. Of course, since it's possible Trakenians are long-lived, some or all of the Doctor's aging actually might take place while he travels alone with Nyssa between Timeflight and Arc of Infinity. Again, however, none of it probably occurs between Arc of Infinity and Resurrection of the Daleks -- while he travels with Nyssa, Tegan, and Turlough -- because Tegan ages only about a Terran year and a half.

It's possible, too, that Trions are long-lived, but still, none of this aging occurs while the Doctor is alone with Turlough between Resurrection of the Daleks and Planet of Fire; the opening dialogue in Planet of Fire makes it quite clear that almost no subjective time has passed in the TARDIS since the closing moments of Resurrection of the Daleks. And none of it occurs while the Doctor travels alone with Peri between this story and Revelation of the Daleks, since Peri only ages about one Terran year in that interval.

Therefore, my theory does not allow for even one long Gallifreyan year -- let alone one hundred fifty -- to elapse for the Doctor in the company of Adric, Tegan, Turlough, or Peri; the time difference between Pirate Planet and Revelation of the Daleks must occur with Romana and/or Nyssa -- and Romana is by far the more likely.

In THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #1, I maintain that crossing one's own time-line to meet oneself is apparently too tricky an operation to be brought off properly by the TARDIS, as seen in Mawdryn Undead. In The Two Doctors, a meeting of Doctors by means of the TARDIS is accomplished, but I believe it is successful only because it is brought about through direct intervention of the Time Lords. Despite the sixth Doctor's contention that anyone who travels as much as he does is bound to run into himself occasionally, the second Doctor's presence at a point of the Time Continuum concurrent with the sixth Doctor is actually due to the fact that he is on an errand for, and has been placed there by, the Time Lords on Gallifrey.

The Doctor's sex and love life is analyzed in my column in THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #1, along lines set down by fellow series watcher Gretchen Van Dorn. My own views on sex in the TARDIS derive from my hypothesis that Gallifreyans are procreated by state geneticists, and Time Lords are raised in an atmosphere of repression and detachment. In their zeal to worship the intellect over all, even over the actual use of the intellect, the Time Lords by some means manage to medically stultify those "animal passions" that actually make us "human."

But the Doctor and Susan leave Gallifrey while Susan is still developing physically. Deprived of her treatments before they have run their course, she suffers all the physical and emotional traumas and needs that are a humanoid adolescent's lot. This leads to what, for a Gallifreyan, is classified as erratic behaviour, excessive even by the Doctor's standards -- as the Doctor himself cannot help but notice. Once he has diagnosed the problem, he would probably decide -- having been raised in a society where no incest taboo is necessary, and perhaps out of his own jealousy

of Susan's attention -- that the logical solution is for him to provide for her desires himself, after, perhaps, a little therapy for himself to over-ride his own conditioning.

I see this circumstance as only strengthening the bond between them, although Susan naturally still has a preference, usually subconscious, for someone her own age. I also see it as giving both the Doctor and Susan an open-minded attitude toward sex as an act of friendship bonding -- rather like the attitudes displayed in Robert A. Heinlein's heroes and heroines, and for the most part by the Japanese in James Clavell's Shogun. The Doctor might then try to impart this view to all his travelling companions, even the male ones, with degrees of success varying from companion to companion depending on their upbringing. I will leave individual scenarios as an exercise for the reader.

Despite the theory of Unidirectional Time proposed in THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #1, it isn't true that every subjective time the Doctor meets the Daleks, it is objectively later than the last subjective time. Both the British and American houses of Marvel Comics have published proposed histories of the Daleks -- in DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE #77 and the DOCTOR WHO comic book #9, respectively.

As far as the Daleks are concerned, I prefer the view of D.B. Killings, of Chicago's Skaro Hunting Society, that the Dalek stories on the whole occur in the order of their production for television; that is, in keeping with the theory of Unidirectional Time. I have found a few necessary exceptions arising from dates given in some of the stories but, by and large, the Killings-Gadzinkowski history of the Daleks looks like the following. All dates, where noted, are given within the story -- or so my sources claim. Underlined dates are ones requiring the story involved to be placed earlier than its order of production.

DATE	STORY	EVENTS OF INTEREST
<u>2164 minus "a million" minus thousands</u>	GENESIS OF THE DALEKS (1975)	Creation of Daleks by Davros ends thousand-year nuclear war between Kaleds and Dals; supposed death of Davros
2164 minus a million	THE DEAD PLANET (1963)	Thals destroy Dalek city on Skaro, along with all known Daleks
<u>2020</u>	POWER OF THE DALEKS (1968)	Daleks establish secret production bases in Earth's space colonies
2164	THE DALEK INVASION OF EARTH (1964)	Earthmen foil Dalek Invasion of Sol III planetary system
<u>21xx</u>	DAY OF THE DALEKS (1972)	Daleks attempt to change history of Earth via time travel to 19xx to precipitate World War III that wasn't supposed to happen
?	THE CHASE (1965)	Daleks chase the TARDIS through time to try to exterminate the Doctor
4000	THE DALEK MASTER PLAN (1966)	Daleks conceive major campaign with dual objectives of finally conquering Earth and of exterminating the Doctor once and for all

?	EVIL OF THE DALEKS (1967)	In the wake of their Master Plan, Daleks accidentally introduce "human factor" into Dalek production
?	PLANET OF THE DALEKS (1973)	Daleks secretly instigate war between Earth and Draconia, only to be foiled when a suicide mission of Thals trace them to their new base on the ice planet Spiridon
?	DEATH TO THE DALEKS (1974)	Daleks begin galactic plague to decimate other races
? ¹	DESTINY OF THE DALEKS (1979)	Stalemate Dalek war with Movellans; Daleks return to Skaro and revive Davros to break deadlock; Davros captured and turned over to Earth authorities
? ¹ +70	RESURRECTION OF THE DALEKS (1984)	Daleks rescue Davros to find cure for Movellan-engineered virus; Davros again supposedly destroyed
? ¹ +70+Y	REVELATION OF THE DALEKS (1985)	Davros creates Daleks loyal to him instead of to Supreme Dalek; regular Daleks capture him and his followers

The history of the Cybermen is not quite as knotty, since there is less of it. Both Marvel magazines have tackled this problem, in DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE #83 and the DOCTOR WHO comic book #10. My own perspective, again juggling slightly to accommodate dates mentioned in their respective stories:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>STORY</u>	<u>EVENTS OF INTEREST</u>
<u>1975</u>	THE INVASION (1969)	Cybermen invade Earth
<u>1985</u>	ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN (1985)	Time-travelling Cybermen attempt to change the outcome of events of THE TENTH PLANET
1986	THE TENTH PLANET (1967)	Cybermen attempt to drain Earth's energy into their own rogue planet, formerly a sister planet of Earth
2070	THE MOONBASE (1967)	Cybermen seize control of lunar weather control station
?	TOMB OF THE CY- BERMEN (1968)	Archaeologists discover Cybermen frozen in suspended animation
21xx	THE WHEEL IN SPACE (1968)	Cybermen take over an Earth space station

2526

EARTHSHOCK (1982)

Cybermen attempt to destroy the formation of an alliance that would ultimately vanquish them

25xxx

REVENGE OF THE
CYBERMEN (1975)

The last of the Cybermen attempt vengeance against the Planet of Gold that defeated them

In Hand of Fear, Sarah Jane Smith says goodbye to the Doctor because he has received a summons to Gallifrey and can't take an alien to the home of the Time Lords. However, there have been occasions -- both before and after -- when aliens have been transported to Gallifrey via the TARDIS in apparent violation of this Immigration embargo (Jamie and Zoë in The War Games; Nyssa in Arc of Infinity; Leela in Invasion of Time; and every second character appearing in The Five Doctors). But it must be remembered that in the first two instances I have cited, the TARDIS's passengers are brought to Gallifrey by the High Council themselves -- although only incidentally, since they are really after only the Doctor. In the latter two instances, the aliens are brought to Gallifrey by someone with whom even the High Council are in no position to argue.

I have two updates on the history of Gallifrey as I have previously outlined it in THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER #1. First is obviously The Trial of a Time Lord, the fourteen-segment twenty-third season of DOCTOR WHO, which strips the sixth Doctor of his title as Lord President and once again puts him on trial -- this time, before an Inquisitor appointed by the High Council -- for his violations of the Time Lords' non-interference laws. And this time, he is on trial for his life. His prosecutor, the Valeyard, turns out to be a later incarnation of himself; he is a distillation of the Doctor's own dark side from between his twelfth and final incarnations, and is out for his remaining regenerative cycle. While the Doctor battles the Valeyard in the Matrix, the Master uses the Matrix to provoke insurrection on Gallifrey and depose the High Council. The Doctor defeats both the Valeyard and the Master; his Inquisitor becomes the new Lord President; and the Master is captured in the Matrix for the Time Lords to deal with as they please. But the Valeyard, unknown to anyone, survives and is at large.

My second historical update concerns The Two Doctors (1985), in which the second Doctor states that the Time Lords have manipulated him from his very first departure from Gallifrey. Although he speaks of himself as "exiled," he states that his "officially unofficial" status as the Time Lords' agent is "the price I pay for my freedom." On the face of it, this is contradictory to DOCTOR WHO history as presented in The War Games (1969). At that time, it seems to viewers that the Doctor is the Time Lords' agent only after the events of The War Games; before that, they don't know where he is. If the Doctor is working for them from the very beginning of his travels, why is the High Council so annoyed with him in The War Games?

My own first idea is that the Time Lords contrive the meeting of the two Doctors in order to use the resultant time differential vis-a-vis my solution to the Lethbridge-Stewart Paradox (see THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER #1), and change history so the Doctor has always been their agent. Although this solution satisfies the continuity puzzle, in this case it strikes me as a clumsy, overly complex rationalization; the two problems aren't similar enough to have the same solution -- although the Time Lords, as the late Robert Holmes has envisioned them, would certainly stoop to that if they have to.

DOCTOR WHO watcher Caitlin Bestler suggests a better answer. According to Bestler, the Doctor is not an agent of the High Council at all -- but of the Celestial Intervention Agency! The CIA is independent of and not answerable to the High Council, who are consequently so uninformed of its

activities that they don't know the Doctor is its agent. It is so secret a society that non-member Time Lords, even High Council members, who know of its existence are few, and even they know very little or nothing else about it. It has been mentioned in DOCTOR WHO's dialogue only once (in The Deadly Assassin, a Holmes script). Therefore, by Bestler's hypothesis, the trial in The War Games is a sham, a hoax on the High Council; the Doctor keeps secret his association with the CIA despite the consequences (his change of appearance and exile). This leads one to believe he is not quite so averse to being their agent as he pretends to be -- or perhaps his aversion in later years stems from what happens because he keeps quiet at the trial. And every Time Lord who sends the Doctor on a mission must then be a superior of his from the Celestial Intervention Agency.

I extrapolate further. The Celestial Intervention Agency is founded, although in secret and not by that name, in the wake of the Minyan Incident, by Time Lords who don't like the new non-interference policy. The Doctor is recruited after the debate on miniscopes (referred to in Carnival of Monsters, 1973). Their agents, to hide the Agency's existence, pretend to be independent renegades; the Doctor and Susan are the first. The Master is their first mistake; once off Gallifrey, he betrays the CIA to pursue his own ambitions. The Teacher and Drax are also CIA field agents; the Monk and the War Chief -- assuming neither is an earlier incarnation of the Master -- may each once have been CIA agents, or may each be true renegades. The Rani's story, however, leads me to believe she is a true renegade.

In any event, as time passes, the hierarchy of the Celestial Intervention Agency are able to persuade the High Council of their point of view, and the non-interference policy is relaxed. And about the time of The War Games, the Celestial Intervention Agency is officially founded with the endorsement of the High Council, although which nomad Time Lords are its agents remains top secret.

Robert Holmes himself contends that the Doctor is put on trial by his actual superiors, the High Council, in The War Games; that he knows, and they know, that he has only been following their orders; and that this is merely an indication of what unbelievable hypocrites the Time Lords really are. The Celestial Intervention Agency is their "Public Relations and Cover-Up Division," protecting their universal reputation of benevolent isolationism -- despite such Gallifreyan actions as the moving of Earth and its entire constellation across the galaxy in order to cover up a breach of the Matrix by the Master (Trial of a Time Lord, 1986). The more Holmes says about Time Lords, the more corrupt they turn out to have always been.

The Holmes explanation is a simpler one than mine or Bestler's, and therefore, by Occam's Razor, is the most likely to be true. However, one notes that the Bestler hypothesis doesn't contradict any known facts from the DOCTOR WHO canon, and that the Holmes history of Gallifrey is a revisionist history, dating from his writing of The Deadly Assassin; it could, in turn, be revised in the future.

After all this, the only continuity loophole left from The Two Doctors is that Jamie, when The War Games rolls around, knows nothing of Time Lords. A little hypnosis explains that away.

Finally, Bestler suggests that the device supposed to be built into the TARDIS to prevent materialization in dangerous locales has had its polarity reversed by the Doctor's superiors...

Comments? Questions? Criticisms?





ROBIN HOOD

AN ARTIST'S VIEW



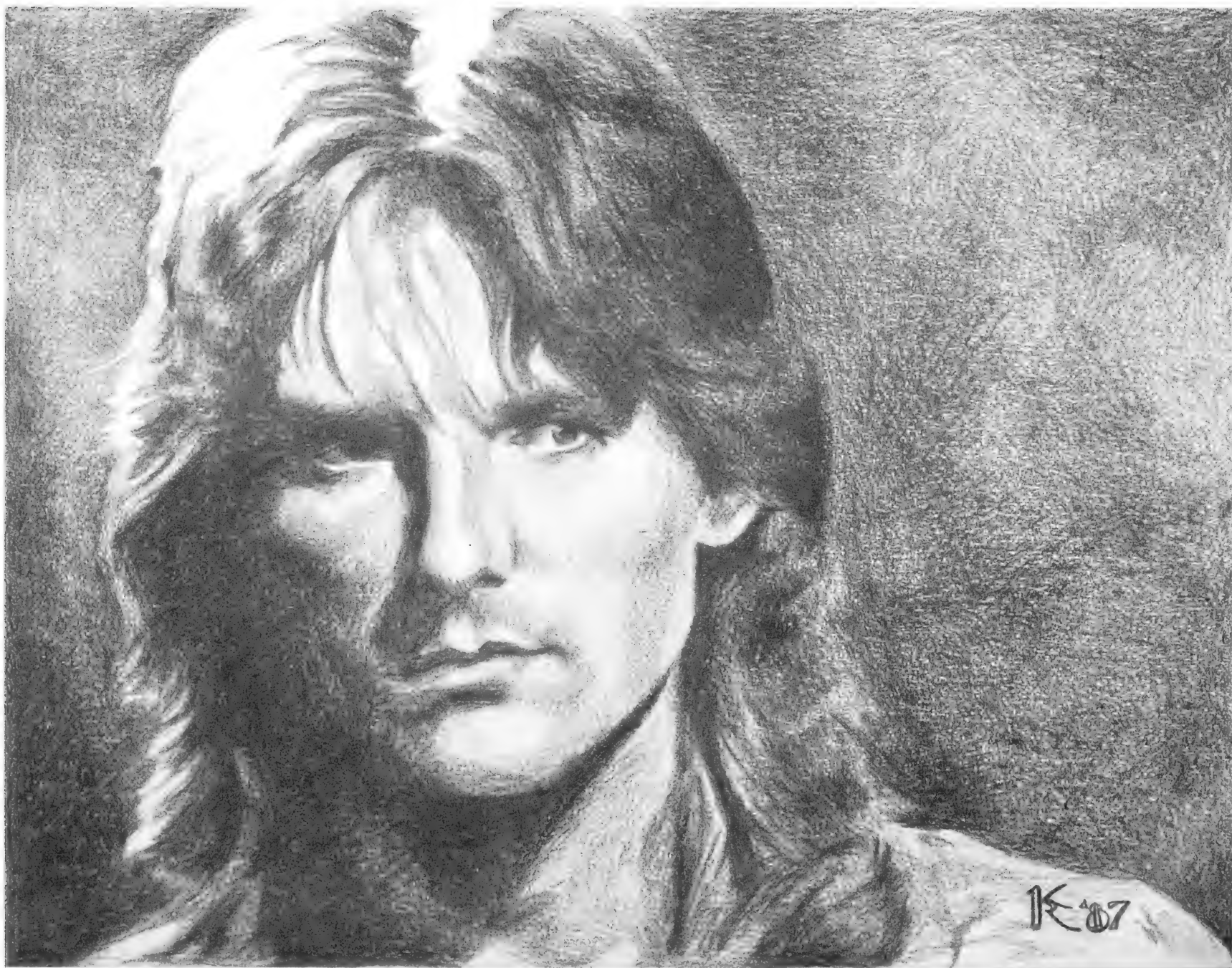
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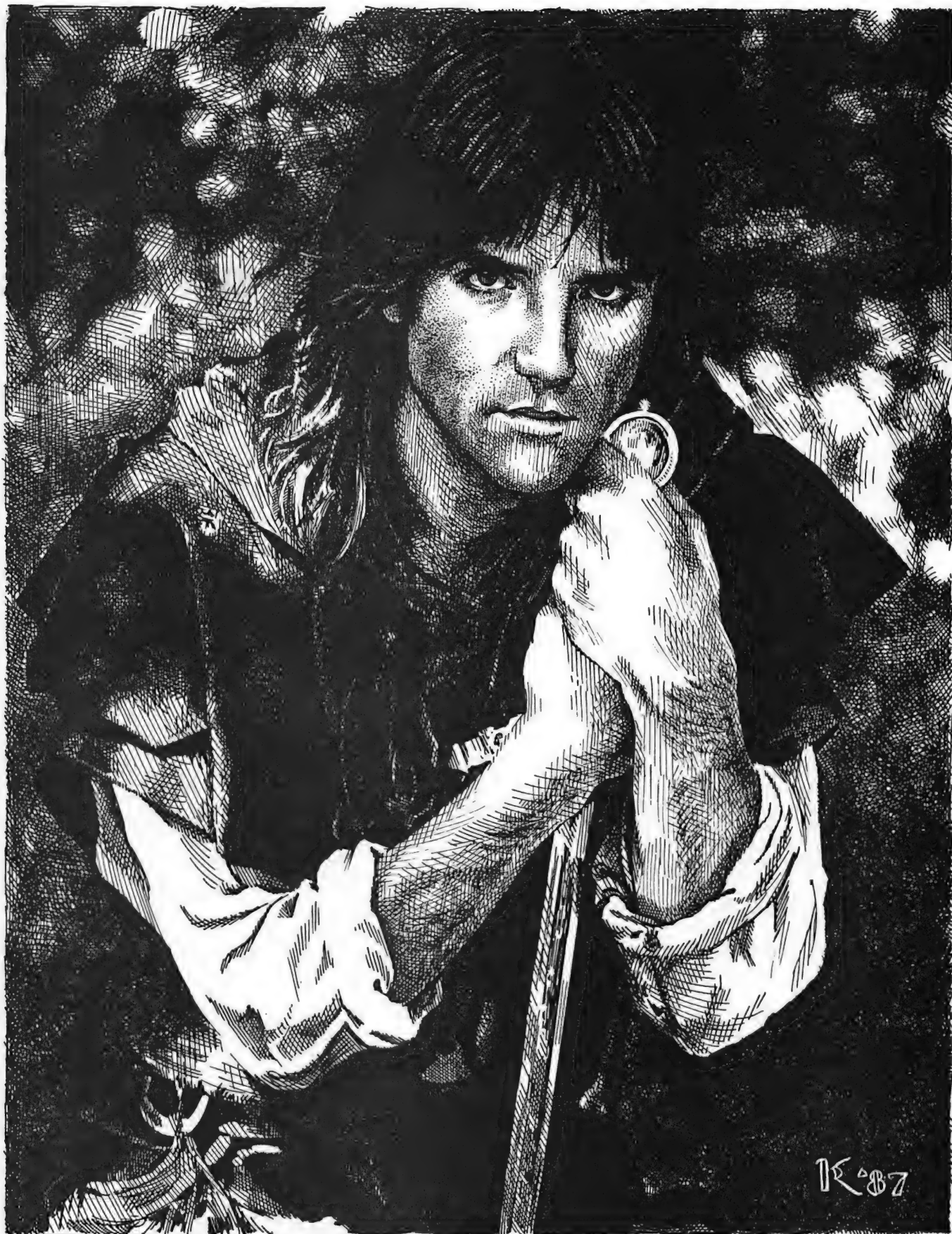
KAREN RIVER



The portraits comprising Karen River's "ROBIN HOOD: An Artist's View" have been reproduced in a format suitable for framing.







1587





"Mourning Is a Long Time Coming"

(By Mary Robertson)

Del Tarrant couldn't decide which hurt more, his head or his heart. "Terminal" is an apt name for this God-forsaken place, he brooded, staring bleakly out into the deepening shadows of the surrounding forest. They had been here a scant twenty-four hours, and already had lost Liberator -- the most advanced ship in Federation space -- and Zen, the ship's computer.

Then there was Cally. His breath caught as he thought of the vibrant Auron telepath who had been his crew-mate and his friend. Her death was Avon's responsibility, and Avon will pay. I'll make sure of that. He favoured the man beside him with a baleful glare.

Kerr Avon, the recipient of Tarrant's ire, sat near their small fire with his nose buried in a battered, smoke-stained box, seemingly oblivious. But oblivious was the one thing he was not. He knew all too well of Tarrant's emotions at the moment -- and of Dayna's, and Vila's.

Without moving, he shifted his gaze to the beautiful black woman in front of him. Dayna Mellanby was full of the impetuosity of her youth. She was angry now -- angry at the loss of her friend, at the loss of the ship that had become her home -- but she had good instincts. When her anger had run its course, she would, if not approve, at least try to understand. Avon couldn't say the same for Tarrant, who, for all his piloting experience, was an impatient, uncontrolled child.

That left only the thief -- Vila of the quick mind and quicker fingers, Vila with his bumbling, bubbling surface and hidden depths. Vila had known Blake, had known Blake and Avon together. He alone would be able to see why Avon had to attempt the rescue that brought them to their present straits, with no Liberator, no Zen -- and no Cally.

The names of the lost ran over and over through his mind like a litany. Blake, Gan, Jenna, Anna...Cally... He suppressed an urge to shiver, and looked up at the darkening sky instead.

"It's getting late," he announced suddenly, his acerbic voice cutting into the private thoughts of his companions. "We must be up early tomorrow if we intend to reach high ground. I suggest you sleep while you can." Deliberately, he set aside the damaged computer he held and stood, one hand automatically checking his weapon. "I will take the first watch," he continued flatly.

"I don't suppose we have any say in the matter," Dayna commented in a soft, dangerous tone, her eyes locking with his for just an instant before he turned away.

"No."

Vila, who had wandered a slight distance away in his search for fire-wood, caught the last exchange. Uneasily, he edged closer. They were all angry, edgy, upset...but there was something in Avon's voice... He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but there was something...

Tarrant had no such problem. Avon's voice raked over his raw nerves and aching head like tongues of flame. All the pent-up resentment of the last few months, the last few days, lent power to his

voice as he lashed out at the other man's back. "We always have to do it your way, don't we, Avon? Your way, or else. Well, where has your way gotten us this time? You've managed not only to lose Liberator and Zen, but also to kill Cally as well. You, Avon. I hope you're satisfied."

Tarrant was baiting him, Avon knew. Baiting him would relieve his own anger, his own pain. Anger, pain -- these were things Kerr Avon could understand and ignore. His back stiff, he continued to walk, but Tarrant was not one to give up so easily. Struggling to his feet, he started toward the older man. Avon, hearing him, stopped, but did not turn.

"Look at me when I talk to you. Look at me, damn you!" Grabbing the other man's arm, Tarrant pulled him around to face the fire. Both Dayna and Vila took an involuntary step forward, sure they would have to rescue the pilot from the folly of his own action. No one did that to Avon -- ever.

Much to their surprise and relief, however, Avon allowed the familiarity -- glowering at the younger man, to be sure, but not raising a hand against him. He satisfied himself with, "Sit down before you fall down!" The words were delivered in such an icy tone that Tarrant's hand jerked back almost of its own volition.

Vila studied the two men from his relatively safe spot outside the ring of fire-light. Avon was not well. Had Tarrant tried this same stunt even a day earlier, they would still be searching for the pieces. In fact, the last time Tarrant tried to thwart Avon, he was rewarded with a gun shoved against his belly. Avon was not a man to antagonize even on good days -- and today was not a good day.

No, such passivity was definitely not normal. Vila felt as if he were missing something important, perhaps something that had happened while he was still aboard Liberator. Cally told him a little of what Servalan did to Avon, but only a little, enough to make him wonder what she hadn't said. Cally was always their peace-maker, their mediator, the balance between the two antagonists who stood silently glaring at one another across the crackling camp-fire. With her gone, someone else would have to mediate -- before they killed each other.

And he was better qualified than Dayna, worse luck.

With a sigh, he approached the bristling tableau. He screwed on a worried frown, and hesitantly slid between the two men. "Avon. Avon!" he whined in his best pleadingly child-like voice. "I heard something. Over there. It sounded big...and hungry." He pointed toward the shadowed woods. "Maybe someone should...?"

A brief flash of something like gratitude crossed Avon's face before his features settled into their customary mask. "I doubt even a starving beast would find you palatable, Vila. Stay here. I will investigate."

"But..."

"Stay here!" Wheeling, Avon stalked off, his black clothes quickly fading into the shadows.

Well, so far, so good. I've managed to avert one major explosion...

Of course, that still left him to face the wrath of a smoldering Tarrant, who grabbed him by the shirt. "What the hell are you about, Vila? Don't you ever get in my way like that

Vila had had just about enough of the pilot's bullying -- enough to make him bolder than usual, although no braver. At least Avon respected his talents. Sometimes, Tarrant was even worse than the Federation. "Shut up, Tarrant, and sit down. Make him sit down, Dayna, and leave me alone," he whimpered in a self-pitying tone. "Avon would've taken him apart. You know he would. Tarrant ought to thank me for saving his life."

The black woman, who had stood silently in the shadows throughout the incident, walked over to take Tarrant's arm. "Much as I hate to admit it, he's right. You should sit down. You're wobbling, and you look awful."

"Little you care," growled the pilot, shaking off her hand. "Little anyone cares -- particularly him." They all knew whom he meant. "Cally's dead, and all he can do is fuss over his damned blinking box." He aimed a kick at the silent computer.

Before Dayna could open her mouth, Vila came closer, staring up into Tarrant's eyes. "After all this time, you still don't know him, do you?" he said, the intensity of his gaze belying the soft regretfulness in his voice. "He cares, Tarrant, but he needs time. You didn't see Cally, w-what was left of Cally. He did." The thief shuddered. "He was down in the tunnels a long time, searching. He hasn't said more than a few dozen words since then."

"He made himself plain enough. He's probably mourning that bloody computer."

"I don't think so." What Vila did not -- would not -- say was that he had followed Avon into those tunnels, seen his rigid control crack, seen him shake in paroxysms of solitary grief until he made himself sick. Only Vila noticed that Avon didn't eat dinner, although he assisted in preparing the meagre meal. "He cares, Tarrant. He cares more than you and I combined. But caring won't get us off this cursed planet. ORAC might."

Emboldened by the other man's silence, the thief gave him a gentle shove. "Avon may be an Alpha, but he's got Delta instincts," he said, allowing admiration to creep into his tone. "We take care of our living before we mourn our dead. You, on the other hand..." He let the words trail off into silence, their unvoiced meaning clear. "Now, sit."

"Well, well, well," Tarrant murmured as he stared at the smaller man. "So our little thief has finally found his tongue."

"Tarrant..." Dayna began.

"Keep quiet!"

"Vila's only trying to..."

"I said, shut up! Or do I have to shut you up?" Turning, he shoved her aside and staggered off toward the forest. "Leave me alone!" drifted behind him over the chill air.

Vila and Dayna looked at each other in alarmed helplessness. "He's not recovered from the explosion yet," the thief ventured tentatively. "Don't you think someone should fetch him back?"

The woman's dark eyes were thoughtful. "No," she answered at last, "but I do think someone should follow him, and make sure he doesn't get into any trouble. I'll go. You wait here for Avon."

"Alone?" he squeaked.

For once, she seemed almost sympathetic. "Don't worry, Vila. Just stay close to the fire. When Avon returns, tell him where I've gone." With that, she, too, disappeared.

"But how will I...? Never mind. 'Don't worry,' she says. Easy for her," he mumbled, jumping as a twig snapped. He shivered despite the warmth of the fire.

What a mess I made of that. Cally would be ashamed... Confronting Tarrant is little short of suicidal, almost as bad as confronting Avon. But he made me mad, though. Anyone with half a brain could see Avon's upset; it's just that he doesn't show pain the way most people do. You'd think Tarrant would have learned that by now. That bump on his head must've scrambled his brains more than usual... He shivered again as he scanned the encroaching darkness, and moved closer to the fire.

It was full dark before Avon, silent as a stalking cat, returned to stand just inside the circle of light, waiting to be recognized. "Where are Dayna and Tarrant?" he asked, his voice dangerously quiet.

Vila started; he hadn't seen him return. "Wha...? Oh, Avon, you're back! Tarrant got mad, and..." As he explained, his words tumbling over each other in his haste, the other man's eyes narrowed with annoyance. "...and I didn't know what to do except wait, so..."

"That fool! Oh, very well. Wait here, Vila, while I go find the children."

"But, Avon..."

"Wait here, Vila." He relented a bit, sensing the thief's fright. "You'll be fine. I need you to tend the fire. Tarrant doubtless will require both warmth and attention when we find him." With that explanation, he departed, leaving Vila alone once again.

Avon combed noiselessly through the woods for more than an hour, his mood growing blacker with each step. The young fool could be anywhere. He could even be dead...

Death isn't a difficult state to achieve on Terminal. It claimed Cally easily enough, where even an alien invasion failed. Cally is dead, and...

No! He wouldn't allow himself to pursue the thought. Mourning was a luxury he could ill afford to indulge in, given their present circumstances.

He suddenly stumbled over something in the trail. Tarrant! Quickly, he knelt to feel for a pulse. At least the younger man was still alive and, aside from his obvious state of unconsciousness, seemingly unhurt.

The problem was getting him back to camp. He wasn't small, and the camp-site was a good distance away -- too far to carry him. He could enlist Vila's help, he supposed, but leaving Tarrant only increased the risk to him from attack or exposure. Besides, Avon wasn't all that sure he could find this place again. Injured or not, Tarrant would have to walk.

After checking to ascertain the pilot had sustained no additional injuries, he pulled him up to a sitting position and lightly slapped his cheek.

With a groan, Tarrant awoke to find Avon crouched before him, his eyes glinting like a cat's.

"The others are worried about you." The older man's voice held no hint of warmth. "We must return to camp. Can you walk?"

Tarrant nodded, then wished he hadn't; the sharp movement had brought his headache back in full measure. He stood carefully, using one of the trees for support until Avon drew the younger man's arm across his shoulders.

They walked in silence, Tarrant's as much out of embarrassment at having to be rescued as out of anger. It was hard to tell what Avon was feeling. Occasionally, the pilot pulled away from his companion's grasp; Avon didn't try to prevent it. After a few stumbling steps, however, Tarrant found himself grateful for assistance, leaning heavily against the other man as his vision blurred. Several times, Avon signalled a halt, listening carefully to the night noises for some sign of trouble, only to resume their mute journey once he satisfied himself they were in no danger.

Dayna had already returned to camp. Snatches of conversation floated toward the two men as they approached. "...lost him...could be anywhere..." she was saying in a thoroughly disgusted and very worried voice. "I didn't think...good enough... I came back to get my bearings, then..."

"Dayna, look!" Vila interrupted, pointing. "Avon found him!"

The two rushed over to relieve the computer tech of his faltering burden, and half-carried Tarrant to the fire. Avon followed slowly.

When he reached them, the pilot was already settled against a half-rotted log, Dayna on her knees at his side. Vila was occupied with melting snow in a dented pan they'd found in the wreckage. Avon went to him, standing quietly over him until he looked up.

"What happened?" the thief asked.

Their eyes held for a long moment before Avon chose to reply. "I found him on the path, unconscious," he answered at last, "and brought him back. You are in charge until I return."

"Wha...? Me?" Vila squealed as he watched his almost-friend steal off into the black Terminal night. "Return from where? Where are you going? Avon? Avon!"

"Be quiet!" Dayna hissed. "You'll wake him." She nodded toward Tarrant, who had fallen into a light, restless slumber.

"I'd like to do a lot more than that," the thief muttered resentfully. He had caught the flash of pain, not quite successfully hidden, on Avon's face when he thought Vila doubted him. How must he feel about the cruel taunts Tarrant had flung at him? Still, he had gone to the man's rescue, although whether out of responsibility or guilt or friendship, Vila couldn't be sure.

"You're not being fair," the woman scolded him. "He's hurt."

"So is Avon."

Dayna stared at him, trying to fathom his meaning. She often discounted Vila, but there were times when he revealed unexpected insights. They always caught her by surprise. "We should never

have come here," she said at last. "Now, Liberator is gone... And Cally."

The thief crouched beside her, looking down at the sleeping pilot. Then he placed a hand on Dayna's shoulder, forcing her to face him. "Dayna, he couldn't not come. Cally or I would have made the same decision, come to the same conclusion. It could have been Blake."

"He should have told us."

"He was only trying to protect us."

She frowned. "We don't need protection. We're not children."

Slowly, thoughtfully, Vila shook his head. "You're wrong, Dayna. You and Tarrant, you don't know. I had a lot of time to think while I was waiting for you, time to remember. Avon's been protecting us all along, and Blake before him. We've just been too close to see it. I think Cally did. But then, she could always see through him." His brow furrowed in concentration, he struggled to find the right words. "Once, when I was really mad at Avon, she told me to think back to all the people we'd run into since we'd met, to think about how he'd treated them, and why." He reached for her hand, as if trying to will understanding into her puzzled dark eyes. "Think about it, Dayna. I just now realized what she meant. Avon will never say he cares, not in so many words. He can't -- or won't. But I have never seen him protect anyone voluntarily unless he gained in some way -- anyone except us." He paused a second before adding, "He didn't have to rescue Tarrant, you know."

"He needs a pilot."

"Not as much as we need a computer tech."

"But..."

"I know." He stopped her protest with a deep sigh. "He made a mistake, a bad one, and Cally paid for it. Haven't you ever been wrong, made a mistake, you or Tarrant? Cally knew the risks. We lost a friend, and a ship. But what did Avon lose, Dayna?"

Their eyes locked. Vila could tell she was too wrapped up in her own pain to recognize Avon's right now. Maybe later. Tearing his eyes away, he glanced at the fire. "My water's boiling."

Tarrant woke to the sound of their voices. He lay still, his eyes closed, as he listened to his friends' conversation. They seemed momentarily to have forgotten him. It was strange to hear Vila defending Avon; usually, it was Dayna who took the computer tech's part, while the thief complained incessantly about Avon's carping. In his present befuddled condition, it was almost too much to take in. Perhaps he had been too hard on Avon, as Vila seemed to think. Perhaps Avon did care. But the fact remained -- Cally was gone. She might still be alive if Avon had been more trusting. I'll have to think about that. Tomorrow... He drifted back to sleep with Vila's final question still ringing in his head. "What did Avon lose?"

From his position outside the camp's perimeter, Avon listened, too, straining to hear the soft voices. He knew he should tell Vila he was still nearby, but suddenly, it seemed like too much trouble. Besides, it was interesting to hear the thief's view of their disastrous encounter.

Did he care? He wasn't sure, although there were times when his protective urges got the better of his instinct for self-preservation. At least Vila didn't seem to blame him for Liberator, or

for Cally...

Cally... His heart ached when he thought of the beautiful Auron. I should have told her not to follow me. I should have realized... But telling -- even ordering -- was never enough in the past. Would it have been sufficient this time? "Perhaps it was my fault..." he whispered aloud.

Blake was the key. Avon wasn't certain why he kept searching for the rebel leader. Was it friendship he wanted, or freedom, or something else altogether? That question might never be answered now. If Servalan is correct, then Blake's dead, has been dead for a long time. Yet another name to add to the list, yet another reason to regret...

The hours passed slowly. The camp was quiet. Even Vila finally settled into a ball near the fire, snoring gently. Apparently, they still trust me to keep watch, even if not to lead. Tarrant's never shown me that measure of confidence before, always challenging, always arguing. It's understandable. He covets the position for himself. He might just have won this time...

Avon listened. Nothing stirred. As long as I remain alert, it's probably safe enough to stay by the embers for a bit and get warm. The fire can stand tending, anyway...

Softly, he made his way back, gathering sticks as he went. He squatted against a log, feeding twigs one by one into the flame, feeling his eyes grow heavy from the heat...

He jerked himself awake to find Vila staring at him.

"Go to sleep," the thief whispered. "I'll take the watch."

"Vila..." he began, irritated at being caught.

"Go on. You're asleep on your feet. Servalan wasn't exactly gentle with you. Cally told me." He silenced Avon's protest with the name. "You need to rest."

"Cally said too much," the computer tech murmured, realizing the truth of Vila's words, but too stubborn to concede the victory.

"Did she? I'm not sure she said enough. Go to sleep, Avon." He got to his feet, taking the gun, and encouraging the other man to lie down, or at least sit down. He watched until Avon's breathing slowed, his chin dropping to his chest. He was asleep.

Vila glanced about to make sure the others were safe. They had curled up together, Dayna's head resting on Tarrant's arm. Well, she'll be alert in the morning. That's something... He doubted the rest of them would be ready to take on the Federation. With an ironic little smile, he turned and headed into the forest.

Dayna was up at first light, nodding to the thief when he crept back into camp. Together, they improvised a sparse breakfast before attempting to wake their sleeping crew-mates. Tarrant stirred and opened his eyes as the scent of boiled herb tea wafted his way. He moved cautiously, but without pain, as he sat up and stretched. Avon, however, only shifted a bit in his sleep, moaning softly.

Vila was just about to try a cautious shake when the computer tech came suddenly, violently awake, sitting bolt upright to scream, "No! I cannot...!" before realizing where he was.

"Easy, Avon, take it easy." The thief knew better than to touch him, and so offered what reassurances he could from a safe distance.

Avon was breathing hard, but he gathered himself quickly, fighting for control. Tarrant, in particular, shouldn't see him like this. Feeling more than a little disoriented, he struggled to his feet.

"Here, drink this." Vila thrust something into his hands. "Careful, it's hot." He made sure the other man wouldn't drop the cup before releasing it into his grasp and stepping back.

He drank obediently, his eyes raking the bedraggled band. Tarrant sat on a log, looking pale, and trying as desperately as Avon not to show any sign of weakness before his rival. Dayna, tending the fire, looked worried. Her eyes flew from Tarrant to Avon and back, as she tried to decide how much truth there could be to Tarrant's accusations. Vila's gaze remained on the computer expert, however, until he was sure Avon was fully awake and aware. Then he turned his attention to breakfast.

"Good morning, Avon," Dayna finally chirped, reaching for some semblance of normality. She was still confused, but they needed unity to find a way off Terminal, and she would do her best to see they had it. "The food is hot."

"I am not hungry." Avon turned away, leaving Dayna and Vila to exchange frowns. Still, it was no more than they expected. They watched while he checked on ORAC, then surveyed the surrounding forest. "We must leave this place," he announced.

"And where do you propose we go without a ship?" Tarrant snarled.

"I don't think..."

"No, Dayna," Avon snapped, turning to face them again. "He deserves an answer. I do not know, Tarrant, where we shall go or what we shall do without a ship, but we cannot do it sitting here. The high ground to the south will provide more protection while we decide what to do. It is also warmer. Fifteen minutes." Whirling, he stalked away.

The black woman watched until he was out of sight. There was something... "Tarrant, you are an arrogant fool to antagonize him," she stated as the computer tech disappeared, "and if Avon doesn't kill you, I just may. Leave him alone."

Startled into silence by her unexpected vehemence, the young pilot sulked through the remainder of his meal. Vila cheered inwardly. He gulped down the last of the tasteless food, then set about breaking camp. Avon returned to a clearing swept clean of all but three people and a battered box.

Bending to pick up ORAC, the computer tech came eye to eye with the one man he least wanted to talk to -- Tarrant. But the younger man had been considerably chastened to realize he was alone in his persecution of Avon. Summoning all his courage, he managed to meet the older man's steady gaze. "I'm sorry," he offered.

For a moment, Vila tensed, sure they were in for another battle. But Avon turned away, his eyes for once unshielded and full of pain. "So am I," he whispered. "So am I."



"Test Match"

(By Kathie Hughes)

"It's all very simple, really," the Doctor said, exasperated.

"But I still don't understand." Nyssa shook her head. "Why is it necessary to keep changing sides of the court? And why is the batsman considered the defensive player, when he's the one who adds points to the score? It's all too confusing."

Tegan laughed at the Time Lord's distress. "Go ahead, Doctor, explain it to her."

He paced off a few steps. "Very well, I'll demonstrate. This hat-stand is your wicket." He placed it carefully against the outer door. "This chair is mine." Skirting the humming central console of the TARDIS, he snagged the chair and carried it through the doorway into the corridor beyond. Faintly, the two women could hear his voice. "As a bowler, it's my job to try to knock the ball off your wicket, while you defend it with your bat." His voice grew stronger as he re-entered the room. "There." He stared at the door thoughtfully for a moment, realizing what an obstacle it would prove to be for his demonstration. "This won't do, I'm afraid."

Nyssa remained seated on a stool by the console, poised and puzzled, but not ready to give even an inch. Tegan, on the other hand, leaned against one wall, grinning. Let's see how the Doc handles this, she thought.

"Well," the Time Lord said, "you get the point. I..."

"No, I don't get the point," Nyssa insisted. "And I don't understand your passion for this game. Why do you find it so fascinating?"

He was appalled. Not find cricket fascinating? This young woman's education is sorely lacking in some areas...

"All right, all right, if I can't explain properly, I'll show you. What could be better than an afternoon at the M.C.C., eh?"

"The M.C.C.?" Nyssa was even more puzzled.

"The Marylebone Cricket Club. Or better yet, the Ashes!" The Time Lord leaned forward, wide-eyed. "We'll remain strictly neutral, of course. No taking sides."

"I should hope not!" Tegan retorted. "Unless you plan to back the Australian team."

He ignored her remark. "Let's see, what would be a good year? 1974, I think, if it's Australia you want." He gave Tegan a quick smile and set the coordinates, beaming at his companions when he had finished.

Nyssa was totally mystified. "Tegan, what is he talking about?"



"International cricket test matches. They're played every year between teams from member countries. It's the cricket event of the year. The whole thing started a long time ago at the Marylebone Cricket Club, when Australia first beat England. The English burned the wicket in mourning and kept the ashes, which they passed back and forth for a while. The whole thing's pretty silly, really."

"Silly?" The Doctor had been half-listening to the exchange. "I was there, and the whole affair was far from silly."

The two women smiled at each other. There was no sense trying to reason with him in this mood. It was off to Australia and the cricket matches for them.

"Doctor," Nyssa asked, "If we're going to Australia, isn't there danger of Tegan meeting herself?"

"Not likely," Tegan laughed. "I was fourteen years old, and stuck off in Brisbane."

"Not going around in social circles, were you?" the Time Lord mused.

"The only circles I went in came from chasing sheep!"

"Well, I haven't much time to brush up on my form." He picked a discarded cricket bat up from the floor. "But you never know when New South Wales can use another good man." Taking a practice swing and muttering to himself, he left the control room, to the great amusement of his two companions.

* * * * *

Nyssa glanced down at her blue skirt and jacket, wondering what one wore to a cricket match. Would they all be expected to dress like the Doctor? Tegan didn't seem to be concerned, so why should she?

She shrugged, and scanned the panel before her. As far as she could tell, the TARDIS was just minutes away from their destination. She wished the Doctor were there to supervise the landing.

As if he could read her mind, he appeared in the console room, freshly shaved and brushed, coat pressed and hair combed.

Nyssa, who had never before seen him look so well turned out, smiled. "I think we're about to land, Doctor."

"Good. Perhaps you should find Tegan."

Just as she turned to leave, a small explosion shook the room, sending them both reeling from the console. A puff of black smoke drifted lazily in a column from the far side. Scrambling up from the floor, the Doctor rushed to deal with the problem, as Tegan flew in through the door.

"What's happened?" she shouted -- needlessly, since the only noise was the Time Lord's muttering undertone.

"Directional stabilizer, I'm afraid. Gone. Blown!" He pulled at a few wires, gingerly dismantling a section of the panel. Sparks flew, and Nyssa hurried to be of what help she could.

"Is it bad?"

"Bad enough. The unit's welded itself together."

"Are we going to crash?" Tegan had a way of getting right to the basics.

"No, I don't think so. We can't move laterally, though, and something could crash into us if we dematerialize."

"What happens now?" The Australian was more than ready to panic.

"We go down...or up. No, down, I think, and hope there's something solid to land on." He looked up at Tegan's startled face. "Oh, don't worry, there's the TARDIS fail-safe mechanism to protect us, remember?" Then, "If it works," he added under his breath. "Nyssa, hold these two wires together. We'll have to bypass that part of the circuit. Tegan, keep your hand on this switch. When I say, push it to its middle position."

Tegan froze, staring at the console. Why does this always happen to me...?

"Quickly!" the Doctor barked, and she jumped, putting her hand where he indicated. Stretched across the console, keeping a practiced eye on the coordinates, the Time Lord reached for the power control and increased it. "Tegan...now!"

The TARDIS shuddered and hummed to life as she threw the switch into its setting. Sparks flashed around Nyssa, who stoically held her position, her eyes fixed on the Doctor's face. Obviously holding his breath, he slapped his hand down on the last control, and the TARDIS landed with a thud. A delighted grin lit the Time Lord's face as he turned to Tegan.

"There, now, see? She always gets us down safe and sound, don't you, old girl?" Affectionately, he gave the console a pat.

"We don't know that yet," the erstwhile stewardess countered. "Let's see where we are."

The smile vanished from his face at her ingratitude, and he turned to Nyssa, who watched him warily. She still clutched the wires he had given her to hold. Gently, he took them from her and tripped the control for the view screen.

The view outside the TARDIS did little to allay Tegan's fears. Before them lay miles of rolling water, tinted a dismal grey by a sky full of threatening storm clouds. No sign of land could be seen, just the pitching horizon.

The Australian paled. "Where are we?"

The Doctor squinted at the screen. "I don't know. The middle of the ocean, I would guess."

"But we must have landed on something," Nyssa volunteered. "We're not sinking."

"Yes, it seems the TARDIS has found us a ship." He grinned, his flagging spirits already rebounding. "Shall we see what we've found?" Tegan and Nyssa exchanged glances and kept their posts as he opened the door.

Outside, the view was much the same, accompanied this time by a gust of chilling wind. A wave struck the side of the TARDIS, splashing through the door and soaking the Doctor's shoes.

Catching Tegan's look, he moved toward the door. "Stay here," he ordered.

A foot-wide ledge was all that separated him from the waves below. Clutching the side of the TARDIS, the Time Lord edged his way around to a safer position on what was obviously the deck of a small ship. Wind whipped at his hair and caught the tails of his coat as he scanned the deserted deck. If only someone would appear, they could help me move the TARDIS away from the edge...

Inside, Tegan paced. "I don't like this much," she said. "Suppose we fall overboard with him out there?"

"He told us to stay here," Nyssa answered. "But I do see your point. The storm is getting worse, and I can't see the Doctor anywhere."

"Do you want to try it, then?"

She nodded, and opened the door. Again, the two were struck by the violence of the weather. They had to shout to be heard over the wind.

"I don't like this much, either," Tegan announced as she inched her way around the TARDIS, followed by Nyssa. The rain had started, and water streamed from their faces.

"Where do you suppose he's gotten to?" the Australian called over the wind.

Her companion shook her head, peering across the deck. A sudden flash of lightning sent them scrambling for the cover of an overhang, just as the Doctor appeared around the corner.

"I thought I told you..." he shouted. "Oh, never mind. There doesn't seem to be anyone on this side of the ship. We'll have to go below." Nyssa nodded, her usually bouyant curls sticking to her face. "Come on!"

He opened a door and pushed them both through, closing it after them and shutting out the noise of the storm.

"Any idea where we are?" Tegan asked. "Or what kind of ship this is?"

"No, and yes, in that order. It's a freighter, I think. What registry, I've no idea, although the name on a lifeboat said Mary Ellen."

"At least there are lifeboats," she replied.

"Well, explaining our presence here could be a little tricky, so start thinking. We must get the TARDIS to a safer position, so I suggest we find someone to help us. And soon."

The deck swayed sickeningly, tossing them all against the bulkhead. Tegan was already beginning to feel a bit green. Taking a deep breath, she righted herself and trudged off down the corridor, the others following.

Poorly lit, the ship gave the impression of age -- not decay, but definitely hard use. The decks were covered with chipped paint in a colour that might once have been green. The bulkheads were

smudged and grimy.

It's not encouraging, Tegan thought, her mind filled with visions of leaky tubs and disreputable sailors. Lost in her thoughts, she rounded a corner and collided with a large figure in a black slicker.

"Hallo, what's this?" Surprised at the sight of the three dripping strangers, the man stopped.

Tegan backed up and looked instinctively to the Doctor for help. He moved her aside and stretched his hand out toward the sailor.

"How do you do? I'm the Doctor, and these are my companions, Nyssa and Tegan."

The big man shook his hand, a slow grin spreading across his face. A damp cigarette dangled from his mouth. "Oh, aye, of course you are. But that doesn't explain what you're doing here aboard this ship."

The Time Lord hesitated, hoping for once that Tegan could quickly formulate one of her stories, but she was silent. Oddly, it was Nyssa who stepped forward.

"Our ship has broken down, and we need some help. If you could just..."

"Ship, is it?" He laughed. "I've been on watch for the last four hours, and there's been no ship in these waters but the Mary Ellen." He leaned casually into the roll of the ship with the stance of a practiced seaman, while the others slid backwards against the wall.

"But there is," Nyssa insisted. "Please come with us, and we'll show you."

The man's eyes softened as he took a look at the strangers. "Come on, then. Let's see this ship of yours."

The Time Lord led the way back up to the deck. If anything, the storm was worse, and waves leapt over the side of the ship. Fifty feet away, the TARDIS rocked dangerously close to the edge.

The sailor paused, rubbing his chin. "That thing? Don't remember seeing that before..."

"Yes," the Doctor shouted, "that thing. If you could just help us push..."

Suddenly, the deck pitched violently as a wave slammed into the side of the freighter. In horror, the Time Lord and his companions watched as the TARDIS teetered on her precarious perch, then toppled into the sea. The Doctor, shock registering on his face, scrambled toward the edge, sliding on the slippery deck. Only the quick reflexes of the big seaman kept him from following his strange craft.

"Here, mate," the man called, grabbing a handful of coat tail, "it's gone. Let it go, now. Come on in out of the storm." Physically, he pulled him back into the protected corridor where his companions waited.

"She's gone," the Doctor murmured. "My TARDIS, gone... Quickly! You must have the captain turn around!" He turned back toward the deck, leaning against the door. "We must go back." Tegan laid a hand on his arm, trying to find some comfort for the anguish she saw on his face. He faced the sailor. "Please, I must talk to the captain."

The man nodded. "I'm sure he'll want to talk to you, too -- all of you. This way."

With that, he turned, and led them down the corridor.

* * * * *

Nyssa and Tegan sat shivering in the captain's cabin, their wet clothes clinging to them. One of the crewmen had given them each a blanket, but the covering did little to ease a chill that was more than physical. The Doctor stood miserably in the centre of the room, his heavy coat and wet jersey hanging limply from his slumped shoulders, while the captain's voice droned on.

"What am I going to do with you, eh? I cannot, and will not, tolerate stowaways, no matter what the circumstances. I don't know how you got on this ship. In Calcutta, I suppose. Or how you've kept from being seen all this time. I can't just have people hopping on and off like this was some sort of passenger liner."

"Please," the Doctor interrupted, "Captain Stewart, if you could just help me get my ship back..."

"Ah, yes, your ship. Well, I've heard enough about ships turning into little blue boxes. Fletcher says it was there right enough, but hardly big enough for any kind of ship I know."

"Yes, well, that's just the point. You wouldn't..."

"Ship or whatever," Tegan broke in, receiving a black look from the Doctor, "that blue box has everything we own in it. We've got to get it back."

"Impossible." Captain Stewart shook his head. "These waters go to a depth of four kilometres. Not quite like pulling the cork out of the tub, now, is it? No, the question is not that blasted box, but what to do with you."

The captain looked around the room. He'd had stowaways before, of course -- little boys with the urge to go to sea, unhappy husbands, and the like -- but never anything like this lot. Their story was ridiculous. Spaceships that can fly through time! Impossible! Then he looked again at the two young ladies, dripping and miserable. They might be my own two girls...

A sneeze from the Doctor brought him back to the problem at hand -- three strangers, no money, and puddles on his rug. "Well," he conceded, "I am short-handed. If you'll take on some extra duty, I'll be agreeable to calling it even for you and the young ladies. We'll be putting into port in Darwin in a few days. I've no doubt you can find some work there. Now, I'll ask Jack to find you some dry clothes."

He rose to usher them from the cabin, but the Doctor made no move to leave. Nyssa and Tegan, huddled in their blankets, exchanged glances, praying silently that he would cause no further trouble. But the Time Lord, as always in charge, was suddenly preoccupied with a chart on the wall.

"Where would you say we are, Captain?"

Stewart crossed to the chart, considered for a moment, then jabbed his finger at a spot in the vicinity of Christmas Island. "'Bout there, I'd say."

The Doctor shifted his position, hands in his damp pockets, staring at the chart. "Yes, and also in the vicinity of the Java Trench, I gather." At the captain's nod, he added under his breath, "It would be, wouldn't it?" Suddenly, he swung around to face the curious seaman. "I'd be glad to work for you, Captain Stewart, as would my young friends here. Anything you say, within reason."

The captain gave the Time Lord a hard look. He couldn't quite put his finger on what it was about the man that bothered him. "Good. We'll talk more about it tomorrow, when the weather's cleared." Still puzzled, he took the Doctor's outstretched hand. "Goodnight, then."

In the corridor, Tegan stopped. Between clenched teeth, she muttered, "I don't think there's much we can do for this ship." She was feeling distinctly unwell, and not in the mood for swabbing decks.

"Oh, come now, Tegan, a little honest work in the fresh sea air will do you a world of good."

"I doubt it."

"Oh, Mr. Fletcher!" Nyssa exclaimed as their friend from the deck appeared, carrying a bundle of clothing.

"It's Jack, miss," he answered. "I've told my mates what happened with your gear, and they got together some stuff for you to wear. Not really proper for ladies, I'm afraid, but it's clean and dry. First Mate says you can have his cabin, but the Doctor will have to bunk with us." Shyly, he handed the bundle to Nyssa.

"Thank you." She smiled. "And please tell your friends we appreciate their generosity."

Jack Fletcher smiled and nodded. "Cabin's this way." He led them down the corridor. Out of his heavy raingear, he was surprisingly less bulky than he had first appeared. A tall, lean man, he cultivated the easy, relaxed manner of the Australian drover, coupled with the gait of the practiced seaman.

"If you want to come down to the galley later, I'm sure the cook can come up with some tucker." He paused before a door, knocked, and, receiving no answer, went in. The room was sparsely furnished, with few luxuries, but to Tegan and Nyssa, it seemed a haven. Smiling their thanks, they gratefully closed the door.

* * * * *

Tegan woke with a start. In spite of her queasy stomach, she had slept well, but the unfamiliar surroundings troubled her. Then the impossibility of their situation returned, and she frowned.

The movement of the ship seemed much less, which was a good sign. Slowly, she slid out of the bunk as quietly as possible, trying not to disturb Nyssa, who was still asleep. They had divided their pile of clothing the previous night, giggling over the poor fit and the appearance they would make. Even though their own things had dried overnight, the shipboard gear seemed more appropriate, and Tegan dressed herself in a shirt and jeans. Without comb or toothbrush, she felt she looked terrible, but could do nothing about it. Now, to find the Doctor...

By the time she reached the deck, she had become accustomed to the rolling of the ship, adjusting her steps so as not to bump into anything as she walked. The bright sunshine and warm breeze that

greeted her lightened her mood even more as, eyes shaded, she searched the deck for some sign of the Doctor. Men were working at various tasks, but none looked familiar. Shrugging, she approached one and asked for directions to her friend.

Darting curious glances at her, the man directed her astern, where she soon discovered the Time Lord and Jack Fletcher busily reassembling the motor of a dilapidated winch.

"I see they've found a good use for you, Doctor," she laughed. He squatted next to the grimy machine, grease and oil covering his hands as well as his borrowed shirt and jeans.

"Good morning, Tegan." He smiled, his spirits obviously having returned during the night. "Jack here is the ship's engineer, and he's showing me some of the repair jobs that need to be done."

The engineer grinned at her. "There's enough to do, no mistake, but if you'll excuse me, I'll be off for a smoke." He strolled around the corner.

The Doctor rose, wiping his hands on a greasy rag, and squinted at her through the bright sunshine. Suddenly, he sneezed twice, and looked around for something to wipe his nose. In desperation, he used the rag.

"Gesundheit!" Tegan said, stifling a grin.

"Your Terran germs will be the death of me yet," he groaned. "I've been talking to our friend Jack, and I've found some interesting information that might help us get the TARDIS back."

"Oh?" She moved closer.

"Well, first of all, the ship is the Mary Ellen, Australian registry and crew, out of Darwin, so you might be of some help there." She nodded, considering what she might be able to do. "Secondly, Jack thinks he can calculate, with the navigator's help, of course, just about where the TARDIS went overboard."

"How?" she wondered aloud. "It's a big ocean."

"He apparently had just come off watch when he met up with us, so he has a pretty good idea of the time. It should give us a place to start, anyway."

"Yes -- a large place. And how do you plan to get the TARDIS, once we've found it? Captain Stewart said the ocean is thousands of feet deep in places."

"Yes, well, that's my last piece of news. Jack said he read recently of an expedition fitting up in Darwin to explore the coastline of Java. He thinks it's the French scientist, Jacques-Yves Cousteau, and if they haven't left by the time we reach Darwin, I might be able to convince him to help us." He sneezed again, a reminder of the nightmare of the previous night, but his eyes glowed. At least he had something to work with.

"But why should he want to help us?" For years, Tegan had been an admirer of the famous French diver and his work, and she couldn't imagine what the Doctor could offer to convince Cousteau to help them in their plight.

The Time Lord threw her an irritated look. "Why shouldn't he?"

Just then, Jack returned with Nyssa in tow, carrying a glass of water and a bottle of pills.

"Good morning, Doctor," she said brightly. "I brought you some medicine for your cold. Jack says it's aspirin."

"It's also deadly to Time Lords," he replied as he quickly handed it back to her.

Jack had stepped aside and was surveying the mess on the deck. "Well, back to it, then," he said, pleased to have the Doctor's help. "We'll let you girls clean up when we're done."

Tegan opened her mouth to protest, but a stern look from the Time Lord stopped her. Swallowing her pride, she plumped herself down on a box to wait her turn. The Doctor nodded approvingly, his eyes twinkling, and tossed her the greasy rag.

With a shriek, she dropped it, then treated them all to a colourful display of Australian vernacular.

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Nyssa was exhausted, more so than she could remember ever having been before. Hard physical labour was not her forte, and the hours spent cleaning up after the Doctor left her drained. She glanced at Tegan, who seemed none the worse for wear, and envied her friend's stamina.

While they worked, Jack Fletcher had never been far from them, casting himself in the rôle of protector, quietly puffing away on his ever-present cigarette. His early shyness around the two women had dwindled. By the end of the day, he eagerly entered into their conversations, even to the point of teasing them and questioning the Doctor on his mechanical skills.

Tegan laughed at one of his questions. "Station? I hardly think you could call it that. More like a farm, really, on the outskirts of Brisbane. We had cattle for awhile, then sheep, but we never really made a go of it. But I can tell you, I was chasing jumbucks at an early enough age."

The engineer nodded. "Did my share when I was young, but found out I was better at fixing the tractor than riding boundaries. Finally worked my way to Top End and signed on the ship about six years ago. Life suits me." He smiled at Tegan. "Suits me even better now."

They stretched out on a pile of crates, enjoying the tropical sunset. The gentle roll of the waves had a lulling effect, far different from the day before. At the sound of a familiar sneeze, Nyssa looked up. The Doctor strolled toward them, hands in his pockets, a pleased grin on his face. He had changed back into his cricketing costume, but hadn't managed to erase all the oil stains from his face.

"G'day," he said brightly, attempting the greeting. Tegan and Jack rolled their eyes.

"Good evening to you, mate," Jack laughed, emphasizing the time of day.

The Time Lord looked hurt for a moment, then smiled. "Just trying to get into the swing of things."

"You certainly look pleased with yourself," Nyssa observed.

"I should be. I just won seventy-eight dollars playing Two-Up!"

"Two-Up?" She shook her head.

"It's almost the Australian national pastime," Tegan explained. "It's played by tossing two pennies up in the air, then betting on how they'll land. Seems the Doctor's rather good at it."

"I'm not surprised," Nyssa sniffed. "It shouldn't be that difficult to calculate the odds on the outcome of the toss. You merely divide the number of possibilities of success by the number of total possibilities. Very simple, actually. No wonder you won so much money."

"What I want to know is what you used for money in the first place," Tegan countered. "You never seem to have any when we need it."

"Taurusian half-wantron," he shrugged. "No one noticed in the crush, and I won it back eventually. I'm going to have another go at it tonight." Casually, he flipped the coin in question into the air, catching it with great relish.

Jack listened to the conversation with interest. "Suppose you could teach me how that works, Doctor? Not a bad way to turn a bob, I'd say."

"Fair dinkum," said the Time Lord with a straight face.

The others laughed as they rose from their seats. The sun had set, and supper was waiting.

* * * * *

The little port city of Darwin looked like heaven to Tegan's eyes when the Mary Ellen sailed into harbour days later. She hadn't begrudged Captain Stewart the chance to use their labour as payment for transport, but she was sick of cleaning up after the Doctor's handiwork. As usual, the Time Lord fared somewhat better than the rest of them, due to the decayed state of the ship's mechanical equipment. He and Jack made a great deal of headway with their repairs, so much so that the captain was reluctant to part with his stowaways.

"If you've not turned up anything in the next few days, Doctor, I'll be happy to take you on for another run."

"Thank you, but I think we'll find what we're after in Darwin."

A few telephone calls satisfied the Time Lord that the Cousteau diving expedition was still in the city. Now, it was only a matter of asking for their help. He felt confident he could convince a fellow scientist of the urgency of his request. He felt the need for the TARDIS keenly, and was anxious to be underway.

Tegan had other problems. In the past few days, a close friendship had developed between her and Jack Fletcher, and the engineer was obviously distressed at the prospect of her departure. To her, he represented a slice of home, a comfortable big brother with whom she could trade bush tales. What he felt for her, she could only imagine, but the thought of hurting him upset her.

At the dock, once again in their travelling clothes, Tegan, Nyssa, and the Doctor took leave of the crew. As Nyssa looked around her, she had to admit the time spent on the Mary Ellen had been fun, despite the blisters on her hands. If only the circumstances of our arrival had been different, she thought. I would have considered it one of the more pleasant interludes spent with the

Doctor... Unfortunately, the shadow of the TARDIS still hung over them.

As the trio shook hands all around, Jack detached himself from the group of sailors. "Tegan, I've got a couple of days' leave. Could I come with you to see the Frenchman? I'd just like to meet him, you know."

She shrugged. "I can't see why not, although I'm not sure any of us will get in to see him. But, then, if I know the Doctor..." At the mention of his name, the Time Lord turned. "Jack wants to come with us to meet Captain Cousteau," she explained.

"Of course," he agreed. "But we'll have to hurry. I understand the expedition plans to leave in a few days." Quickly, he rounded up his party and, with a parting wave, headed for the warehouse district. They were still a long way from recovering the TARDIS, and each delay made him more nervous.

* * * * *

A dingy warehouse near the far west end of Darwin's harbour served as headquarters for Cousteau's Java expedition. As preparations drew to a close, the activity around the building dwindled. For the most part, the supplies, diving equipment, and scientific apparatus were already loaded aboard Calypso. Captain Cousteau himself had been in and out of the warehouse for days, cajoling, giving orders, and trying to keep his patience with the shopkeepers of Darwin. Each new voyage was a joy, promising opportunity for discovery and excitement, not to mention a pleasant break from the strain of constant fund-raising needed to keep his international organisation afloat financially. But each new voyage also brought headaches, and the annoying little details that had to be worked out before Calypso could leave port.

Another delay to their scheduled departure time had Captain Cousteau in a dark mood. To top it off, a British scientist had telephoned to request a meeting. He finally agreed, more to be rid of the persistent man than out of any interest in his proposals.

As he looked up from yet another unpaid invoice, he saw one of his sons approaching, followed by a small group of people. Foremost among them strode a tall, blond young man in unusual clothing. Cousteau groaned.

Jean-Michel Cousteau ushered the Doctor toward the warehouse door. Inside, a sign inscribed in French and English pointed the way to the main office. Smiling his thanks, the Time Lord went toward the office door, gesturing for his companions to remain behind. He paused at the sight of the wiry old man inside, then rapped on the open door.

Wearily, Cousteau called, "Entrez."

"How do you do? I'm the Doctor."

The French scientist rose and accepted the outstretched hand. "I am Cousteau," he answered, not unkindly. "How can I help you?"

"Captain, I have a long story to tell you. I think it will be of interest, and I hope that when I have finished, you will indeed agree to help me."

The keen blue eyes of the diver searched his visitor's face. Something about the young man spoke of sincerity, with a hint of desperation. But he was a very busy man. "Doctor," he began, "this



expedition is in the last stages of preparation. I am very busy, but I will give you a few minutes of my time, and then we shall see."

A fair man, the Time Lord thought as he related his tale. Cousteau sat calmly throughout, interrupting the narrative only to ask for clarification of words he did not understand.

The Doctor perched on the edge of his chair, wishing he could tell whether the famous Frenchman believed any of his story. "I have little proof," he finished, "and nothing to reward your efforts, other than the scientific knowledge you would gain. You couldn't even publish your findings if we were to succeed." He spread his hands. "But I'm asking for your help, as one scientist to another."

Jacques-Yves Cousteau rubbed his chin. How could this strange story be true? If this man was, as he claimed, from another world, why was his appearance so normal, so human? And yet, his manner spoke of confidence, as if he, at least, believed his story. And his scientific knowledge seemed sound. A crazy story, that much was certain...

"These are your friends?" he asked, indicating the little group watching intently from the warehouse doorway.

"Yes," the Doctor answered. "Tegan and Nyssa are my travelling companions, and the young man is a sailor from the Mary Ellen. The women can corroborate my story, if you'd like to talk to them."

"Perhaps later," Cousteau said. He turned his attention back to the Doctor. "You will please forgive my skepticism, but your story is, shall we say, incredible, and you have no proof."

The Time Lord sighed. "I have proof of sorts. Myself. There are certain physiological differences between my race and yours. I would be willing to submit to a medical examination."

The Frenchman smiled. The fool was probably harmless. What could it hurt to humour him? "Very well, Doctor," he agreed, rising from his chair. "I have a young medical assistant with little to occupy his time. If he can find proof for your claims, then perhaps we will consider what can be done." He picked up the telephone on his desk and relayed orders in rapid French, listened for a moment, then rang off. "He will be here shortly. If you would not mind, I would like to talk to your friends. Seulement. Alone, s'il-vous plaît."

"Of course, and thank you, Captain, for your time." The Doctor motioned Nyssa and Tegan to the office, leaving a disappointed Jack behind. The Time Lord soon joined him while the two women entered the office. Hesitant at first, they were at once put at ease by the famous Frenchman's beaming smile.

"Your friend," he began after introductions were made, "does he suffer from delusions?"

Several minutes later, the Doctor and Jack were approached by a friendly young man in a white T-shirt. With a sidelong glance and a shrug, he ushered the Doctor off toward another building. Is this what life with the crew of the Calypso will be like, the Time Lord wondered. Well, I certainly won't be bored...

In the office, Cousteau chatted with Nyssa and Tegan, trying to make some sense of the tale he had just heard. Everything they said corroborated the Doctor's story. When the interview was completed, he began to politely dismiss his guests, only to be stopped by a white-faced medic who tugged him into a corner and blurted out his findings.

Tegan smiled her amusement and strolled off to talk to Jack. Nyssa laughed, shook her head, and followed. The Doctor has done it again, she thought.

The two women had barely reached the puzzled engineer when they were joined by an excited medical assistant and Cousteau himself. The Frenchman gave them a measured look. Can their impossible story really be true? "Please," he said, "would you come with me?"

In a make-shift laboratory, mostly disassembled for Calypso's voyage, the Doctor shrugged into his coat, wincing at the pain in his left arm. The astonished young medic, upon finding two heartbeats, had been a little rougher than necessary with his blood test. A quick scan of the slides with a microscope had sent him scurrying to find Cousteau, leaving his patient alone in the room.

In a few minutes, Cousteau himself entered the room, to find the Time Lord casually leafing through a pile of reports. Without a word, the French scientist crossed the room to the table, where he peered through the microscope. One after another, he compared slides of the Doctor's blood samples with those of normal human blood. Finally, his face impassive, he laid an open hand on the Time Lord's chest.

"My apology, monsieur," he said. "I did not believe you. Now, I am faced with the truth. Please understand if I take a moment to collect my thoughts." The Doctor nodded as the Frenchman walked slowly to the door. "Andre will see to your comfort."

Comfort was the last thing on young Andre's mind as he watched his employer leave the room. He was more than a little frightened of this alien being, vividly recalling the pulp fiction of his youth. Thoughts of all the dreadful things that could happen to him if he made one false move flickered through his mind. He darted a glance at the Doctor, who completely ignored him, then turned his attention to Nyssa and Tegan.

Nyssa backed up a step in alarm, but Tegan held her ground. "Brisbane born and bred!" she spat.

He retreated. Now was not the time to tackle this irate female, not with her alien protector in the room.

Finally, Cousteau returned, his expression thoughtful. "I have been a scientist for many years, Doctor, an explorer for more. In all those years, I have never backed down from a challenge or refused aid to a creature whose life I had the ability to save. But today, you have turned my world upside down. I can no longer think in terms of just this planet." He paused. "I have so many questions to ask you."

"And I will answer what I can," the Time Lord agreed. "But you must know, Captain, that your findings will have to be kept to yourself."

The Frenchman smiled wryly. "Doctor, if I published what I have learned today, I would become a figure of ridicule to my colleagues. Mais non, for my own curiosity, I would ask, and not for people who would not want to know the truth."

"Does that mean you'll help us?" Tegan asked anxiously.

"What you ask may be impossible." Cousteau frowned. "The ocean is very deep in the Trench. If your ship has fallen into it, there is little we can do for you." As the Doctor took a deep breath, ready to interrupt, he continued. "On the other hand, ocean depths vary greatly in that

area. Can you show me on a chart?"

"Yes, approximately." Suddenly animated, the Time Lord described the general location of the TARDIS, relative to what Jack had told him.

Cousteau nodded, and led them to another part of the warehouse complex, where navigational charts lay strewn across a table. He selected one and spread it out, allowing the Doctor to study it.

The Time Lord set his reading glasses on his nose and thoughtfully slid his hand over the paper. After a few moments, he jabbed a finger at a section of the chart north-northwest of Christmas Island. "Here, I would say, allowing for drift."

The diver checked his notes. "I would guess between three hundred and six hundred metres. Deep, but not impossible with a submersible." Tegan and Nyssa made encouraging sounds. "If," he continued, "we can locate the position precisely. That will be difficult." He paused, looking into the Doctor's face. "But we will try." He smiled. "It is the least we can do for intergalactic friendship."

The Doctor grinned.

* * * * *

Andre Dulane took a long sip from the mug of stout standing before him on the table. It was his third of the evening, and he was beginning to feel its effects. All the better, he thought, because the less he had to think about the day's events, the better off he would be. Never in his wildest dreams had the young biologist thought it would be he who discovered extra-terrestrial life -- and now, his greatest discovery was to be taken from him.

He took an even longer gulp of beer. He had taken leave from his University on the advice of his professors, in search of a research project with a grand enough effect to improve his less-than-notable scholastic career. Now, it was his -- and it was being ripped from him by the order of secrecy Captain Cousteau had placed on his crew. It just isn't fair...!

"Well, Andre, mate," a voice called from across the crowded common room of the pub. "Look, Andre's here!" A short, red-haired man ambled over to the table and plopped himself down next to the young Frenchman.

"Hello, Lyle," Andre answered, with little enthusiasm.

"You buying, Froggie?" the other man asked with a laugh. The medic shrugged, which Lyle took as a positive sign. "Harlan," he called, "the Frenchie's buying."

Soon, they were joined by a huge man, who gratefully accepted the drinks that always appeared when the Frenchman was around. When the drinks arrived and preliminary greetings were over, however, Andre slumped back into his brooding mood.

"Here," said the big longshoreman, slapping his empty glass down on the table, "what's eating you, mate?"

The red-haired man looked at Dulane keenly. "Something up with the ship, then?"

"Something's up, you could say," Andre groaned. "The most important event of my life, and I can

do nothing about it." Somewhat dazedly, he ordered another stout, and looked up at his companions. He could hardly call them friends, since their friendship lasted only as long as the drinks held out, but they were the closest thing he had in this God-forsaken place. "Today, I met a man from another world," he announced.

The laughter died quickly when they saw he was serious. "You mean, like South America?" asked Harlan.

"No, another planet, another solar system." He waved a hand in the general direction of the sky. "And I cannot even tell the world of my discovery. The Captain has sworn us all to secrecy." He stared gloomily ahead. "No degree with honours, no fame, no university chair. It could all be mine, if it weren't for his stubbornness."

Lyle's eyes widened. "This spaceman, where is he?"

"Probably aboard Calypso by now."

"Is he dangerous? I mean, does he have a ray gun or something?"

For the first time, Andre realized their interest in his story, and began to regret his indiscretion. "No, I don't think he's dangerous, but he is very intelligent. He is helping Captain Cousteau to rebuild some of the scientific equipment. And," he added, "he looks like a normal human being."

They seemed disappointed at this piece of news, hoping for a real space creature. Scratching his head, Lyle leaned toward the young Frenchman. "Things have been slow around the docks lately, and I got a wife at home always wanting this and that. I wonder what someone would pay for a real, live spaceman!"

Andre Dulane took a last gulp of beer. He wondered, too. Perhaps the price of world acceptance might not be too much to ask...

He thought for a moment about the expedition. Security aboard Calypso was relatively loose, and the crew would be working in the vicinity of several small, uninhabited islands, which would work to his advantage -- if he were willing to take the risk.

The two Australians studied him intently. Suddenly, he smiled. "The price would be high," he answered.

* * * * *

Aboard Calypso, Tegan flopped down on her cot in the small cabin she shared with Nyssa, and dumped the contents of her paper bags in a heap. Her friend quickly added her purchases to the pile.

"Well," Nyssa sighed, "one hundred twenty-six dollars doesn't go very far, does it?"

"Not when you're trying to supply three people. I certainly hope this stuff fits. Never try getting a straight answer out of the Doctor when it comes to Gallifreyan sizes." Tegan pulled a pair of jeans and two T-shirts out of the pile. On top of them, she stacked a razor, toothbrush, comb, and other items she thought the Time Lord might need. "I guess he can borrow what isn't here," she added.

"At least he was successful at Two-Up, or we wouldn't have any money at all." Nyssa leaned over and scooped up the bathing suit the Australian had bought. "Is this really what you wear to swim?" she asked incredulously.

Tegan laughed. "Sometimes. Mostly, it's just for show."

"I can see where everything would show," her companion commented wryly as she held up the skimpy suit, then hastily thrust it behind her when she heard a knock at the door.

"Oh," the Doctor said when Tegan admitted him, "shopping, I see."

She handed him his pile. "I hope everything fits."

"Hmm," he said, studying the garments, one of which read "Brewster's Pub." "I suppose they'll have to do."

"This is Darwin, Doctor, not Paris."

He shrugged. "Well, thank you," he said sincerely.

"How are the modifications going on Captain Cousteau's equipment?" Nyssa inquired.

"Slowly, but I think we can adapt the sonar unit to search out the size and mass of the TARDIS. As for the other alterations, well, I have to be a little careful there. Since," he added with a wicked grin, "I'm not supposed to be interfering with Earth's history."

"Do you need some help?" she asked hopefully. She missed her scientific work.

"Of course. Perhaps, after supper, you can give me a hand with the decompression chamber the Captain has been working on. I think I have a few ideas he can use, and your training could come in handy."

She nodded with delight.

"And what am I supposed to do?" Tegan demanded.

"Oh, you'll think of something. Brewster's Pub?" With a sigh, he left.

Tegan laughed. She got her revenge whenever she could.

* * * * *

Calypso bobbed in the tropical sunshine of the blue-green waters off the coast of Java. Tegan relaxed on the narrow deck, soaking up the sun and watching the crew hard at work. Armed with dramamine, she found her second voyage in weeks seemed more like a vacation than work. There would be no deck-scrubbing this time around, she thought, although she gladly helped out wherever she could; but, thanks to the Doctor and his lovely alien physique, they were honoured guests, and she had fast become a pet of the fun-loving crew.

It would all be such a lark, if there wasn't the TARDIS to worry about... Lazily, she rose, stretched, and strolled toward the rear deck. In the late afternoon, the day's work was winding down. As she rounded the corner, she was pleasantly surprised to see the familiar figure of the

Doctor seated pensively on a coil of cable.

"Doctor! Hello!" she called.

He smiled wanly at her greeting. "Oh, hello, Tegan. You're looking very chipper."

"Wish I could say the same for you. You look terrible!"

And he did. Lack of sleep, coupled with the very human cold he'd caught aboard the Mary Ellen, had left him with a pinched, grey look.

"We may be on a fool's errand," he sighed. "I can only work so many miracles without the proper tools and materials -- all of which are in the TARDIS, of course." She nodded. "I've been able to boost the power of the sonar unit, and fine-tuned it to pick up the location of the TARDIS, but even so, it will be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack." He rubbed his eyes. "I just don't know, Tegan."

She was shocked. In all the time she had known him, she had never seen him like this -- down, of course, but never beaten. She didn't know what to say to make him feel better. The frustration of trying to function in a Twentieth Century world was evident, and he wasn't handling it well.

Madly, she cast about for some comforting words. "We'll find the TARDIS, you'll see," she said lamely. "And then, we'll be off again."

He chuckled at her attempted optimism, so unlike Tegan. "Provided I can repair the directional stabilizer."

"I'd almost forgotten that," she mused. "It seems like ages ago."

"It's the longest I've been away from the TARDIS since I left Gallifrey. She's more a part of me than I realized." He fell silent once more, staring out to sea.

"Would it be so awful, then, to be stranded here?"

He shook his head. "You forget, Tegan, I was stranded here once before. But then, at least, I had my TARDIS with me, even if I couldn't make her work. Now, I feel like a part of myself is missing. I must get her back, or I'll spend the rest of my lives here trying to."

She settled down next to him. There was nothing she could say. But she wouldn't leave him alone like this. If only there was something to be optimistic about...

"Doctor!" Nyssa's voice startled them both as she hurried across the deck. "We've been looking for you. Captain Cousteau's been in touch with the American Navy, and they may have some special diving equipment we can use."

Her enthusiasm was the perfect antidote for the Time Lord's dark mood. Slowly, he raised his head from his hands, the beginnings of a smile lighting his face. His depression disappeared, replaced by excitement.

"Deep water equipment?"

"Yes, a diving suit that can go deeper than Calypso's saucer."

"Good! Right, then, all we have to do is find the TARDIS! Well, no sense moping around. We're wasting time!"

Tegan stared at him. He hardly seemed the same person with whom she had spoken just moments before.

Shaking her head, she followed the others across the deck. One thing was clear -- she would never understand the Doctor.

* * * * *

Nyssa yawned and rubbed her eyes. It seemed like hours since she'd begun her turn at monitoring the sonar screen, when actually it was closer to forty-five minutes. The crew was reluctant at first to allow a mere girl to handle the sophisticated scientific equipment, but once they witnessed her work with the Doctor, and the regard in which he held her opinions, she was given free rein. Now, she wished she'd been a little less capable, and a little more like the free-spirited Tegan, who was having the time of her life.

Once again, she checked the grid, forcing her mind back to duty, and off the charms of Calypso's most interesting crew. So far, they had found nothing in the deep waters off the coast of Java that fit the TARDIS's proportions. The Doctor, she knew, was becoming discouraged at their apparent lack of progress, and only Captain Cousteau's never-ending optimism and curiosity kept him distracted.

The sonar blips droned on, and Nyssa yawned once more.

Across the bridge, the Doctor and the senior members of Calypso's crew huddled over a chart. With one long finger, Philippe Cousteau drew a line along one side.

"This is the section we have covered in the last few days. According to Captain Stewart's log and Monsieur Fletcher's memory, your TARDIS should be within these boundaries. But if the calculations were incorrect, we could be off by kilometres."

Jack Fletcher leaned his elbows on the table. The big Australian had quit his job on the Mary Ellen in favour of a chance to sail with Cousteau and act as the Doctor's assistant. In the short time he had known the Time Lord and his companions, he had become quite fond of them, and his high opinion of the Doctor amounted to nothing short of hero-worship. Whatever's in the fellow's mysterious blue box, he thought, I'm willing to help retrieve it...

"I'm positive of the time," Jack said. "I was just coming off duty. Couldn't be off more than five minutes, tops."

"Allowing for the current and the force of the storm," the Doctor added, "it should be within this area." He tapped the section they had already surveyed. "Perhaps the sonar just isn't adequate for the depth."

"Non." Philippe shook his head. "With the increased power, it should easily reach four thousand metres. The problem must be with the navigational calculations."

Nyssa was tired of their arguments. This discussion had been going on for days, and tempers frequently flared. She sighed audibly, drawing the Doctor's attention.

"Ah, Nyssa," he said, crossing to her side and squinting at the screen. "Why don't you go and find Tegan? I'll take over here for awhile."

She protested, knowing he was already working double shifts, but he ignored her. Easing her out of the chair, he settled into her place.

"Tomorrow, we will begin south toward Christmas Island," Captain Cousteau decided.

The group murmured their approval, then dispersed, each crewman returning to his work. Only Jack hung about, waiting for Nyssa to leave. "Mind if I tag along?" he asked.

She gave him a smile and turned to the Doctor, who was busily cleaning his glasses. "Can I get you anything?"

"No, thank you," he replied, his eyes intent on the screen. With a last look, she followed Jack to the door.

They found Tegan engaged in a rather raucous card game with several crewmen. A great deal of laughter and catcalls punctuated the proceedings, occasionally interrupted by curses in French. Tegan sat to one side, minus one shoe, but otherwise fully clothed and looking rather smug. The other players fared somewhat worse; a large pile of clothing lay at the Australian woman's feet. She smiled at Jack's appreciative laughter and Nyssa's puzzlement.

"If any of you care to discuss winning your stuff back, you can see me tomorrow," she chirped, gathering the bundle of her winnings in her arms.

One of the crewmen, clad only in a pair of jeans, chuckled. "An interesting game, your strip poker, but we had hoped for a different outcome."

"Didn't you just." Tegan handed part of her booty to Nyssa. They strode from the deck to calls of, "Tomorrow!" and, "We shall see!"

"Fair dinkum, Tegan, as the Doctor would say," Jack laughed. "Strip poker? Where in God's name did you learn to play that?"

"From my dad, of course. Things got a little boring out on the farm. Taught me how to cheat, too," she added. "Oh, don't worry," she said hurriedly, seeing the look on Nyssa's face. "I'll let them win it all back tomorrow. After I win my shoe back." She reached down and removed her remaining sandal. "How about some supper?"

Jack grinned at her. She's amazing! "More French cooking, I'll wager," he laughed, making a face.

"Beats what the Doctor cooks!"

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Andre Dulane hunched over the radio transmitter on the bridge, talking quietly to Lyle on shore. His offer to cover Philippe Cousteau's coffee-break had been gratefully accepted, but he doubted the other man would be gone long.

"Tomorrow it must be," he said quickly. "I will call you again to confirm that the Doctor will be alone."

The reply, distorted by static, was barely audible, but he seemed satisfied. "Good, then, you have the boat, and the shelter on the island. I will see to the rest after we have him."

Once again, static crackled. Then, "Until tomorrow, mon ami."

He signed off as the sound of laughter floated up to the bridge. It's that Australian girl again, he fumed as he switched off the transmitter. He didn't like her.

"I did what I promised," Tegan laughed as she and Jack strolled past the open door. "I let them win it all back -- but the bloody scoundrels kept my shoe!"

Jack Fletcher's deep laughter followed, joined by Philippe Cousteau's.

"I think you are a bit of a scoundrel yourself, Mademoiselle Tegan," the Frenchman observed. With a wave of his hand, he left them to return to his place on the bridge.

"Merci, mon ami," he said to Andre as the young medic got to his feet. "It was good to take a break."

"My pleasure." Andre smiled. After tomorrow, it will indeed be my pleasure...

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It was after 2:00 A.M. Only the monotonous blip of the sonar broke the silence of Calypso's bridge.

The Doctor was on duty once again. His body was in the chair, but his mind was millions of miles away. After nearly a week of constant monitoring, nothing had turned up, and he was bone-tired and discouraged. Yesterday, Calypso's helicopter had delivered the United States Navy's deep-water suit; it would allow them to dive to depths of almost six hundred metres. A good plan -- if we find the TARDIS in water that shallow.

If we find the TARDIS at all...

The ship was dark. Off-duty crew and passengers had long since retired, leaving only the Doctor, Falco -- who was piloting the ship -- and Andre Dulane.

As the Time Lord yawned, Andre ducked into the cramped room, a mug of steaming coffee in each hand. A small smile crossed his lips as the Doctor accepted his offering.

"Thank you, Andre," he said, absently stirring the coffee with the wrong end of a pen.

"Oh, you are very welcome," the young man answered, and went forward with a cup for Falco.

Odd man, thought the Doctor. Since their initial meeting, the medical assistant had avoided him almost totally. There were none of the constant questions he had patiently answered for the rest of the crew, and no further requests for medical information.

For that, he was grateful. Either Dulane has little scientific curiosity, or he is badly fright-

ened. The Time Lord shrugged mentally. One maladjusted crew member was not his concern.

For Andre Dulane, the night seemed endless. He had been on pins and needles since they left port, nervously watching and waiting, his conversation in the pub always in the back of his mind.

Once again, he thought over the procedure he had followed. First, a radio transmission to his co-conspirators, letting them know when the Time Lord would be alone on the bridge. Next, a strong sedative, dissolved in coffee. Then the final signal when all was ready. The two Australians would do the rest, taking the Doctor to a prearranged location. Then, he would find a buyer for their remarkable captive. Simple as could be.

Why, then, am I so nervous? What seemed so rational in a smoky pub in Darwin now seemed nothing short of kidnapping. His hand shook as he signalled the waiting craft. One flash, two, three, and it was done. Now, he had only to wait.

Idly, the Doctor leaned back in his chair, his coffee still untouched on the console before him. For the hundredth time, he ran a finger across the hand-drawn chart. Day after day had dragged by, with no results. He was frustrated and sleepy.

Suddenly, he felt a breeze on the back of his neck; the door to the bridge had opened. Andre again, he thought, not looking around.

But he was mistaken. A pair of massive arms appeared out of nowhere, encircling him and lifting him up and out of his chair.

He squawked, his drowsiness gone. Kicking out, he managed to overturn the chair and knock the mug clattering from the console, but he couldn't manage to get his feet under him.

The kidnapper hadn't expected his presumably drugged victim to put up such a fight, and it was all he could do to hold on to the squirming man. Harlan backed toward the centre of the room, muttering under his breath -- and carelessly allowed the Doctor to get his feet on the floor.

Quickly, the Time Lord twisted slightly, and drove his elbow backwards into his assailant's midriff. With a grunt, Harlan loosened his hold -- not much, but enough to allow his captive to take advantage of the situation. With a mighty heave, the Doctor sent the big kidnapper sailing over his head and into the chart table.

By this time, Lyle, sensing from the noise that things weren't going as planned, had raced to his fallen colleague's aid. Casting about for a weapon, he scooped the empty coffee mug up from the floor, and deftly cracked the Doctor over the head with it. The blow sent him down hard, half across the overturned chair, and half across his first attacker.

Throughout the ship, the alarm went up, as sleepy voices questioned one another in French and in English. On the bridge, panic set in.

The last thing the kidnappers wanted was a confrontation with the crew of Calypso. Still groggy from the Time Lord's judo throw, Harlan staggered to his feet, and slung the unconscious Doctor over his shoulder. Lyle ran ahead of him to the door and jerked it open, then abruptly stumbled backwards into his friend.

A grinning Jean-Michel Cousteau faced him. His friendly smile was in sharp contrast to the shark gun he held pointed at the intruders. "S'il-vous plaît," he said politely, "put my friend down.

Gently."

Open-mouthed, the would-be kidnappers retreated farther, dropping the Doctor in a heap on the deck. He groaned, raising himself on one elbow. Seeing the situation well in hand, he slumped back to the floor.

Most of Calypso's crew had gathered by then, and Captain Cousteau pushed his way through the crowd, eyeing his son with amusement. The young man seemed to relish his rôle of rescuer.

"The Doctor is hurt?" the Captain asked.

"Nothing that won't heal," answered a small voice from the floor.

Turning a cold eye on the Time Lord's trapped assailants, Cousteau stepped closer, seeming to gain inches in stature. "Who are you, and what are you doing on my ship? I demand an explanation."

"We came for the spaceman," whined Lyle. He had decided bluster was the best course. The crowd on deck looked distinctly unfriendly, and he and Harlan were unarmed. He pointed a shaking finger at the Doctor, who sat on the floor, rubbing his head.

Frantically, Nyssa and Tegan pushed their way into the room to his side.

"What are you talking about?" asked Tegan, giving Cousteau a warning look.

"Him," answered the little man. "We know all about him."

"Spaceman?" She laughed. "Don't be silly! Does he look like a spaceman?"

The two intruders took a long look at the Doctor, who truly did look harmless. Taking their cue from Tegan, the other crew members shrugged and practiced looking blank.

"The purpose of our mission," Jacques-Yves Cousteau stated, "is to help my colleague here to recover his equipment, which was lost in a storm. Your imaginations, I am afraid, have been running away with you." He turned to his son. "Alert the authorities."

"No," the Time Lord said. "There's been no real harm done, and I doubt these men have learned anything of interest, for all their trouble. Let them go. Ow!" He winced, then grabbed Nyssa's probing fingers and pulled them away from his head.

"But, Doctor," Tegan protested, "you're hurt. You could have a concussion. Are you just going to let them walk out of here?"

"I'll be all right," he said firmly. "Let them go, Jean-Michel."

The young Frenchman reluctantly lowered his weapon as the would-be kidnappers scrambled past him. Outside, the crowd on deck parted grudgingly, allowing Lyle and Harlan to return to the launch they had tied to Calypso's stern.

"Alerting the authorities would raise questions I would rather not have to answer," the Doctor explained. "Besides, maybe they'll pay less attention to everything they hear from now on."

"I cannot understand how this information could have gotten out." Cousteau was understandably

upset. "Only members of the crew know your secret, and they are sworn not to reveal it."

"I think Andre Dulane can give us some answers." The Time Lord poked his fingers into a puddle of cold coffee on the floor. He tasted it, and grimaced. "Drugged! That would have done some rather nasty things to my system. Dulane delivered it just before I was attacked. His mistake was in not checking to see if his drug had worked." He paused, getting to his feet with Nyssa's help. "You'd better check on Falco, though. I'm afraid he had some coffee, too. We've probably been drifting all this time."

Tegan righted his chair, and helped him to sit down. "We'd better get you patched up," she said.

"Fine. Just call someone other than Dulane, won't you?"

Jack Fletcher, looking pleased with himself, chose that moment to poke his head into the room. "Captain Cousteau, what would you like me to do with this?" he asked with a grin. Gripped tightly in one hand was the shirt-collar of one Andre Dulane; the man was still attached to it.

"I will take care of him. We have a few things to discuss," Captain Cousteau said evenly.

Throughout the confrontation, the sonar blip had continued to sound. Suddenly, it bleeped.

All eyes turned to the sonar screen. "This could be it!" the Doctor announced softly.

"Drop anchor!" Cousteau ordered. The words were repeated across the deck.

"How deep?" asked Nyssa as she leaned over the Time Lord's shoulder.

Charts rustled, and voices grumbled. "Three hundred sixty-six metres." Amazement was evident in Jean-Michel's voice. "With proper equipment, we can dive."

"Or use the saucer," Philippe added.

His father nodded. For a moment, the bridge was silent, filled with an air of contemplation.

"Can it really be the TARDIS?" Tegan asked at last.

"It must be." The Doctor gripped the sides of the console, staring intently at the strong, constant signal on the screen. "It must be."

* * * * *

Too keyed up to sleep, Calypso's crew began to prepare for the dive. Captain Cousteau insisted on a preliminary search of the area before attempting any deep-water diving. None of his crew had ever used the Americans' pressurized gear, and the dangers were too real to risk lives for a false alarm. So Falco, still groggy, but recovering, primed their small submarine for its task.

The Doctor strode across the deck, a red wool cap -- trademark of Calypso's crew -- jauntily covering the patch of white plaster on his scalp. He surveyed the "saucer" with interest.

"When can we start?" he asked, anxious to be off.

Albert Falco, Calypso's most experienced pilot, grinned at him from his perch atop the hatch.

"Calm water, little wind... I would say, as soon as the divers are ready." He waved a hand at the approaching pair, both attired in wet suits. "Here are our guides."

Captain Cousteau and his son Philippe greeted the Time Lord as Nyssa and Tegan hurried to join them.

"Are you certain you're fit?" Nyssa asked worriedly.

"The ship's doctor assures me I'm quite fit, thank you," he answered, ignoring Tegan's close scrutiny. "And I'm ready to be off."

"Albert," the Captain addressed his top pilot, "If you are ready..."

Falco and the Doctor climbed through the hatch of the little submersible, slithering into their padded couches. The quarters were cramped, but adequate for their needs.

With a splash, Cousteau and his son were in the water, ready to guide the saucer into position for its descent. Crewmen lined the ship's rail, calling their encouragement as the small craft swung out over the water, touched the surface, then submerged.

Foremost at the rail stood Tegan and Nyssa.

"Please," Tegan prayed aloud, "let it be the TARDIS. I don't think I'll be able to face him if it isn't."

Nyssa nodded. "Even if it is, there are no guarantees they'll be able to bring it up." At her companion's horrified expression, she added, "The water is still very deep. The pressure may be too great for a dive."

"But can't they just hook onto it with the sub?"

"Hook onto what? Remember, it's still only a police box."

Jack joined them at the rail. "Why the long faces?" he asked. "Isn't this what you've been waiting for?"

Tegan gave him a weary look. "What I want to see is the TARDIS, propped up on deck and ready to go."

Jack's smile vanished, and he stared out to sea. He would miss her, with her independence and spunk. "Come on," he said finally. "Let's go inside and listen to what's going on."

On the bridge, a radio kept the crew in constant communication with the saucer. Captain Cousteau and Philippe, after shedding their gear, followed the three companions in and settled down to listen to the transmissions. They could hear the Doctor's voice through the speaker, occasionally asking for course changes or commenting on some interesting fauna that caught his eye.

"Two degrees port," Jean-Michel instructed. A scratchy reply acknowledged the direction. "Now, dead ahead."

"Can't see anything." The Time Lord's voice was tense. "There's a good deal of sediment and debris. Wait! There is something..."

Silence followed. It seemed to last forever.

What can be taking so long, Nyssa wondered, digging her nails into her palms. Beside her, Tegan gripped the back of a chair so tightly that her knuckles were white.

"I will turn the saucer around," they heard Falco say, "and use the propellers to blow away some of the sediment."

Again, there was silence, as the submersible manoeuvred into its new position.

Finally, the Doctor's voice rang out. "It's the TARDIS!"

A cheer went up around Calypso as the news was relayed from crewman to crewman.

"It's the TARDIS!" Tegan screamed, echoing the Doctor's triumphant announcement without realizing it. Ecstatic, she flung herself into the arms of a surprised Jack Fletcher.

With a huge grin, he hugged her back, reluctantly releasing her as she flew off to hug Nyssa. The celebration on the ship had already begun.

If only the completion of the task will be so easy... Thoughtfully, Captain Cousteau walked out onto the deck to have another look at the American-made diving suit.

* * * * *

The Doctor emerged from the saucer flushed and excited, ready to make plans for the dive itself. With the TARDIS located, all that remained was to lift her from the ocean floor. Three hundred sixty metres was all that separated him from his ship and freedom, and he wanted no more delays.

"We must be cautious," Captain Cousteau advised when they gathered to discuss the dive. "I cannot risk my men without first testing the suit."

"There will be no risk for your men," the Time Lord explained. "I will be doing the diving."

"Out of the question. This requires an experienced diver. You do not have such experience."

"Captain," the Doctor continued patiently, "you have said yourself that your men are no more familiar with this equipment than I am. I see no reason why I shouldn't be the one to dive."

"Because, my dear Doctor, you are not a diver. There is more involved than merely jumping into water over your head. Movement under water requires development of certain skills, knowledge of how to handle the currents and pressure." He paused for a moment. "We will compromise. If you will agree to several days of training while we test the suit, I will consider allowing you to be part of the diving team."

The Time Lord turned his back, trying to control his temper. How can this man be so stubborn?

He turned to face the Frenchman. "Captain," he said through clenched teeth, leaning forward so his nose was scant inches from the scientist's, "we are wasting time!"

"Doctor, this is my ship. Here, we will live by my decisions." With that, Cousteau turned and

left the bridge.

The Time Lord sullenly remained behind. "The man is brilliant, but he has no concept of urgency!"

Nyssa looked wide-eyed at Tegan, waiting for an additional explosion, but her friend just smiled.

"Doctor, just because for once you haven't gotten your own way..."

He whirled to face her, but Tegan side-stepped and blithely danced out the door, Nyssa right behind her.

"Humans!" the Time Lord stormed.

* * * * *

"You have done very well, Doctor," Captain Cousteau commented. "In the past few days, you have mastered skills which would have taken many men weeks or months to learn. Perhaps now, we can begin to implement our plan."

"At last," the Time Lord muttered, skimming out of his wet suit. For three days, he had practiced in the water with the crew, testing the experimental deep-water suit while learning to deal with the unpredictable currents of the Indian Ocean. Under other circumstances, he would have had to admit he enjoyed it, but the forced separation from the TARDIS made him irritable. While he finally came to appreciate the need for instruction, the delay did nothing to improve his mood.

Running a hand through his damp hair, he stretched out in a chair next to Cousteau. Together, they studied a diagram he had drawn up to show the position of the TARDIS.

"If we loop two cables around the middle and secure them with a third, it should be possible to lift her free of the debris. Once the sediment is loosened, there should be no problem. The only thing I worry about is the position of the winch."

"I may have a solution." Cousteau picked up a pencil, hastily sketching another diagram. "A diving platform with a winch attached could act both as a means to raise your TARDIS and as a point from which to begin the dive. The small bathyscape can be lowered directly to the ocean floor, once in position."

The Time Lord nodded. "And a diver in a pressurized suit would merely have to free the sides of the TARDIS, attach the cables, and signal the platform to begin the lift. And," he added excitedly, "if we could attach a cable to each side of the bathyscape, it would add extra stability. Simple, but it should work."

"We will begin tomorrow. One of my divers, Bernard Delemotte, has volunteered to do the dive."

The Doctor sat back in his chair. "No. The TARDIS is my responsibility. I will take the risks."

"But you have no experience with the pressurized suit."

The Time Lord arched an eyebrow at him. "You forget, Captain, I have more experience with pressurization than anyone else here."

Cousteau considered for a moment, then smiled. "Sometimes I forget, mon ami, that you are not



from this world. Very well, you shall dive."

The Doctor returned his smile. "Thank you," he said.

* * * * *

Tegan leaned over Calypso's rail, staring at the reflection of the moon on the water. It was peaceful, deceptively so. She was lost in her thoughts.

"Nice night." Jack Fletcher's deep voice startled her, and she whipped around to face him. "I'm sorry," he laughed, catching her by the arms.

She laughed, too, and shook her head. "Yes, it is nice." She turned to face the water again.

"You're worried about the dive tomorrow, aren't you?" he asked softly as he leaned against the rail beside her.

"Oh, I suppose so. I know the Doctor is very capable, I know it's his TARDIS, and I know he's the logical choice to do it. But I wish somebody else was going to do that dive. It's such a long way down..."

"Well, this is the way he wants it."

"I know."

The big Australian took a drag on his cigarette, then tossed it into the waves. "I think he'll make it. Fair dinkum, as he says." She smiled at that, and looked up at him. "I'll miss you when you go, Tegan."

In the moonlight, he could barely see the expression on her face as he touched her cheek. Brushing back a few stray hairs, he leaned over and kissed her. It was brief -- and tender, and sad.

"I'll miss you, too, Jack."

"Stay, then."

In the silence that followed, they both turned back to the rail. Neither heard the Doctor approach, then turn on his heel and retreat back to the bridge.

"I can't," Tegan said finally.

"Couldn't give you much. A house, maybe a little land..." He rambled on, not wanting to hear her answer.

"Jack, I can't," she repeated. "This isn't my time, and..."

"You belong with him," he finished for her. "I know." He smiled sadly. He didn't understand the complicated matters of time and space she tried to explain to him, or how she could exist in two places at once. He only knew he wanted her with him. "I had to ask."

"I'm glad you did. Because, if you hadn't, I'd always have wondered how I'd have answered."

He looked down at her in the darkness and laughed. Wonderful Tegan... He would miss her. "How about a beer, then?"

"I'd love one," she answered, taking his arm. They strolled across the deck.

The Doctor watched them curiously from the doorway, feeling just a little guilty for his intrusion. Am I about to lose another companion? He scowled. It's getting damned hard to hold onto them...

With a shrug, he turned back toward his cabin.

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The early morning light glittered off the diving platform that was perched on Calypso's stern, waiting to be lowered into the water. Around it, a group of divers and crewmen worked busily at last-minute preparations. Off to one side, in all its regal splendor, was the American Navy's pressure suit, propped up and waiting its turn. All that was missing from the scene were the principal players.

Nyssa stood on the edge of the group of workers, hands on her hips, frowning at the ocean. Falco had told her the sea was calm, but it looked pretty choppy to her. She was nervous, and happy to see Tegan round the corner, walking side-ways in what appeared to be a one-sided conversation with the Doctor. He shook his head obstinately and strode purposefully toward the diving suit. As Nyssa hurried to join them, she could hear the discussion.

"I just don't understand why it can't wait," Tegan said persistently. "What's another day?"

"Another twenty-four hours. Another twenty-four long hours. You needn't worry. Everything will be just fine. Good morning, Nyssa. Now, see, Tegan, Nyssa isn't worried, are you?" He looked pointedly at her.

She looked back. "Yes, I am," she answered. "The wind is picking up."

"Nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense." Tegan pointed at the waves just as Captain Cousteau appeared from the other side of the platform.

"We are ready at last, if the weather will cooperate." The Frenchman turned to the Doctor. "Mon ami, are you certain you want to risk this?"

"Yes. I've waited long enough."

Cousteau nodded, and indicated several coils of three-quarter inch cable attached to the sides of the small diving capsule. "The length should be adequate to secure your TARDIS and still reach back to the bathyscape. Then we will pull you up together."

"Doctor," Tegan interrupted, "can't you just go into the TARDIS and fly it out?"

"No," Nyssa answered for him. "The water pressure will be so great at three hundred sixty metres that, once the door is open, it will be impossible to close it again, and the TARDIS will be

flooded."

"Shorting out the entire electrical system in the process," the Doctor added. "No, this is the only way. Captain, shall we?"

With a bow, Cousteau motioned him toward the suit.

The Time Lord skimmed off his jersey and handed it to Tegan, then, with the help of Captain Cousteau and Jack Fletcher, wriggled into the awkward suit. He stood there for several minutes as the others checked for leaks or drops in pressure, then waved as he was fitted into the ball-shaped bathyscape.

Divers, including Jean-Michel Cousteau and Albert Falco, waited in the water as a crane raised the whole structure, then lowered it gently to the surface of the rolling waves. Carefully, they manoeuvred the craft over to the spot above where the TARDIS lay.

"Nyssa!" a voice called from the bridge.

Giving Tegan a smile, she hurried to help where she could.

Alone, the Australian stared at the platform. "I wish there was something I could do," she fretted.

"Well, you could keep me from chewing my nails to the bone," Jack drawled. His duties completed for the moment, he joined her at the rail to watch the progress of events.

She smiled. It did help to have him with her.

At Captain Cousteau's command, the bathyscape was released from the platform to begin its slow descent to the bottom. Four divers would follow to about sixty metres, where they would await its return, then reposition it as it approached the surface. Inside, the Doctor kept in constant radio contact with the bridge of Calypso.

To Tegan, the wait seemed an eternity. There was nothing to do but watch the platform pitching in the sea. The motion began to make her sick, and she was relieved when a crewman asked her and Jack to join Captain Cousteau on the bridge.

Inside, in the steamy close quarters of the cabin, Nyssa sat by the sonar, monitoring both the position of the TARDIS and the gradual descent of the bathyscape. Cousteau leaned intently over the radio transmitter, listening to reports of depth and pressure, which his son Philippe in turn jotted down on a chart.

"Two hundred metres," the Doctor reported. The breathing mixture made his voice sound unnaturally high. At another time, Tegan might have giggled, but this was deadly serious. "The water's murky even here," he continued.

Slowly, the sphere travelled toward the ocean floor, turning to face the position of the TARDIS, its lights illuminating a path before it.

On the bridge of Calypso, the tension grew. Tegan gripped Jack's hand gratefully, glad for his undying faith in the Doctor's abilities. Thank heaven he hasn't travelled with the Doctor before, and seen for himself the trouble he's prone to getting into...

Finally, they heard the Time Lord's voice again. "Three hundred sixty-one point four metres. That's it. How close am I?"

All eyes turned toward Nyssa as she consulted her graph. "Shouldn't be more than seven metres."

"Can't see anything. Too murky. I'll head due south."

"Southwest would be closer," Nyssa advised.

The Doctor acknowledged the correction and carefully slid, feet first, through the opening at the bottom of the bathyscape. The clumsy suit made movement difficult. But he managed to clear the hatch, attach his line to the side of the small craft, and collect the coils of heavy cable that snapped onto a ring at the side of the suit. His only other tool was a small, collapsible shovel for use in removing sediment from around the TARDIS. Progress was slow as he moved toward his target, with Nyssa constantly correcting and guiding him.

"There she is...I think!" he exclaimed, pausing to brush away loose sediment. "Yes!"

"How deeply buried?" Captain Cousteau asked.

"Well, she's at an angle, door-side down, I'd guess." He dug more sediment away with his hands. "About three-quarters buried, but loosely -- small stones, gravel, and sand."

He worked in silence for a time, digging with his hands and, when necessary, with the shovel. Leaving enough stones to form a base to keep the TARDIS from toppling onto its side, he looped the cable underneath, and then underneath again, securing the two lengths with a third. The pressure suit had articulated joints, but movement was still painfully slow, taxing his patience. Finally, with a flourish, he fastened the last hitch and stretched the remaining cables back toward the bathyscape.

"That's got it," he reported.

Slowly, he followed his own line back to the little sphere, where he attached one cable to each side of the capsule. The exertion of excavating the TARDIS had worn him out, and his laboured breathing could be heard clearly on the bridge above.

Tegan paced, her arms wrapped around her body. It was about the only thing she could do. What is taking him so long...?

"I'm in!" they heard suddenly. "Cables are attached. I suggest we go now. My air is getting low."

Captain Cousteau looked triumphantly at the party assembled on the bridge, nodded quickly, and hurried to the deck to supervise the recovery of the bathyscape. At the door, he collided with Falco, who, still dripping in his wet suit, gazed uneasily at the choppy water.

"Permission to launch the saucer, Captain?"

Cousteau gave him a quizzical look. "Do you feel it is necessary, Albert?"

The other man shrugged, again looking out to sea. "I would feel better prepared."

"Very well, then, but hurry. We will need the crane and all the crew for the recovery."

Falco smiled slightly, and disappeared with a flurry of orders. Crewmen raced to help, including Jack, who offered a quick apology to Tegan.

Inside the bathyscape, the Time Lord felt the motion of the capsule as it was drawn upward. He tried to catch sight of the TARDIS through the small porthole, but could see only a short way from the craft. A sudden jolt told him he had reached the end of the tether.

"Slowly, now," he called, waiting for the information to be relayed to the divers handling the winch. He held his breath as the bathyscape continued to rise, slowly at first, then gradually faster. The TARDIS swung free and was on her way to the surface.

He felt like cheering, like celebrating. Soon, he would be free again. The thought cheered him, and he let his mind wander to places not visited for centuries.

Lost in thought, he nearly missed the slight shift in balance as one of the cables broke loose. His upward motion increased, and the remaining loop slipped inch by inch closer to the edge of the TARDIS. The bathyscape tipped further, bringing him rapidly back to reality.

"Stop!" he shouted. "We're losing her!"

For a sickening few seconds, the bathyscape continued its upward movement. Then it slowed, and finally stopped.

"What is wrong?" Philippe Cousteau shouted into the microphone.

"I'm not certain, but I think we've lost a cable. The balance seems wrong. If we try to go up further, the other cable could slip off. I'll have to go back out."

"No." This was the voice of Captain Cousteau. "Your air supply is running low. We will have to risk ascent as it is."

With a determination that Tegan knew all too well, the Doctor answered, "I won't take the chance of losing the TARDIS again. I'm going to try." He prepared to leave the bathyscape again.

The young Australian looked from the senior Cousteau to his son. "What about the divers? Could they reach him?"

Philippe picked up the microphone again. "Doctor, what is your depth?"

"One hundred twenty-five point five metres," came the muffled reply.

Philippe shook his head. "Too deep."

Tegan dropped into a vacant chair. This can't be happening again...

Suddenly, a new voice was heard, that of Jean-Michel Cousteau. "We cannot hold out here on the platform much longer. The waves are increasing. Much more wind, and we will be in danger of capsizing. We must continue now."

"Wait, just a little longer," Philippe told his brother.

One hundred metres below, the Doctor once again left the safety of the bathyscape. Carefully, he slid through the bottom hatch, this time holding on to the grips at the side. There was no comforting bottom beneath his feet now, only two hundred fifty metres of black water.

A cable had indeed detached itself from one side of the TARDIS; it floated limply from its ring. Squinting into the darkness, the Time Lord contemplated his next move.

A bright light cut through the gloom. Calypso's saucer appeared on his right, skimming along through the cloudy water, its arm extended as if in a friendly salute.

The Doctor watched, intrigued, as the miniature submarine floated below him, shining its light on the blue shape of the TARDIS. Falco circled once, the saucer's pincher arm outstretched and open, and deftly caught the cables holding the TARDIS.

Faintly, the Time Lord heard cheers through the radio, and Captain Cousteau's voice. "We have it, Doctor. Release the other cable. Falco will bring the TARDIS to the surface."

He took a deep breath. How long have I been holding it? He could almost see Cousteau's smile.

The saucer rose beside him, clutching its precious cargo. Through the submersible's tiny port-hole, the Doctor could swear he saw the gleaming smile of a very happy Frenchman. He smiled, too, and, with a sigh, climbed back into his metal womb.

"Merçi, Falco," he murmured. "Thank you..."

* * * * *

Celebration followed celebration as each part of the recovery team reached the surface. First the dome of the little saucer emerged from the water, pitching precariously in the waves. The TARDIS hung from its metal claw, looking rather small and insignificant. Divers plunged into the water to collect the craft and haul it aboard. The submersible followed, bearing a triumphant Falco.

Next to appear were the divers, who scrambled onto the platform to help with the bathyscape, which surfaced soon after. Cables attached, the whole unit was lifted toward the ship. It rocked in the wind, threatening to ram Calypso's side time and again, but the steady hands of the crew prevented catastrophe. Soon, the diving platform itself rested on the deck.

Once again, a cheer arose, as the Doctor emerged from the bathyscape and was pulled clear of the cumbersome diving suit. Damp and sticky, he pushed his hair from his eyes and grinned broadly as Tegan and Nyssa launched themselves at him.

"You did it!" Tegan squealed, hugging him.

"We all did it," he replied as he extricated himself from Nyssa's grasp. He crossed to the blue police box that lay dripping on its side on the deck. "Could someone give me a hand with this?"

Several crewmen stepped forward. Together, they hoisted the TARDIS into an upright position.

For a long moment, the Time Lord just stood there, one hand resting on the door of his beloved TARDIS. Then, raising his eyes to Cousteau, he said, "Thank you, Captain. Thank you all."

The Frenchman smiled. He needed no further thanks.

The Doctor fumbled inside his shirt until he finally found the little key on its chain. Hands shaking, he fitted it into the lock and turned it. As the door opened, he closed his eyes in silent tribute to whatever deity had seen fit to reunite them. Then, in one motion, he swung the door wide and slipped inside.

Several minutes passed without his reappearance. Calypso's crew began to murmur in confusion.

Jack walked up to Tegan, a cigarette held loosely in one hand. "Do you think he's all right in there?"

She chuckled. "He's fine, Jack. Just give him time." She patted his arm.

Suddenly, the door reopened, and a very chipper Doctor emerged.

"Is everything all right?" Nyssa asked.

"Shipshape, I'd say, or she will be, as soon as I repair the directional stabilizer."

Captain Cousteau joined them. "Your instruments are in working order? There was no damage from water, or from the pressure?"

"No, everything seems just fine. She is a spacecraft, after all, built to withstand extremes. But I'd better get to work on her, or we won't be travelling through space or anywhere else. Nyssa, would you mind?" Quickly, he bounced back into the TARDIS, followed by Nyssa.

Tegan saw the disappointed look on Cousteau's face and was ready with an apology. "The Doctor's excited," she explained. "Please, don't take it personally. I'm sure he'll be happy to give you the grand tour just as soon as he gets his gizmo fixed."

The French explorer shook his head. "I still cannot understand where he fits it all."

"You will," laughed Tegan. "You will."

* * * * *

Hours had passed since the Doctor and Nyssa disappeared into the TARDIS. Most of Calypso's crew had long since given up hope of finding out the secret of the mysterious blue box. Even Tegan had left her post by the door.

"He's taking a long time," commented Jack, who stood, hands on his hips, staring at the police box. He was curious, too.

"It's a major repair," Tegan answered. "If it's not done just right, we could finish up back down there." She pointed past the rail to the open water.

"He wouldn't leave without you, would he?"

She snorted. "Not likely. He did that once, and I don't think he'll try it again."

Just then, Nyssa appeared at the door. "He's nearly finished, I think, or so he says."

"And it's going to work?" Tegan asked wearily.

"So he says. But you know the Doctor!" Nyssa laughed at the perplexed look on Jack's face. "He is fallible, you know."

"Well, let's see for ourselves," Tegan said. "Come on, Jack. I'll show you what a real ship looks like."

Taking his hand, she led him through the double doors and into the console room.

For a moment, Jack stood motionless, his eyes taking in the spacious room and the complex equipment. Then a huge smile spread over his face. "Fair dinkum!" he chuckled.

Just then, the door to the corridor flew open, and the Doctor swept into the room, a small plastic and chrome component held gingerly in both hands.

"Jack! Nice to see you again! Be a good chap and give me a hand, would you?"

Without hesitation, the Australian rushed to the Time Lord's side, assisting where he could in the installation of the directional stabilizer. Nyssa worked at the other side of the console, repairing the damage done by the emergency short circuit.

Left alone, Tegan wandered toward her room. It seemed like ages since she had occupied anything but the cramped and messy cabin of an ocean-going ship. Her familiar bedroom seemed gigantic by comparison.

On a whim, she did the first thing that came into her mind -- she brushed her teeth. It made her feel more at home. But there was an emptiness, too. She would miss all her new friends -- and she would miss Jack.

With a shrug, she shook off the feeling and returned to the console room.

"There," the Time Lord was saying. "That ought to do it. Just a small test..."

"Doctor," Nyssa interrupted, "you're not planning to leave without saying goodbye to Captain Cousteau and his crew, are you?"

"No, no, of course I'm not, but I must know if this is going to work."

He flipped the usual switches. Nothing happened.

Then, with a grin, he pounded the console once with his fist. The time rotor sprang to life, and a look of pure satisfaction crossed his face. Checking the power output, he nodded and reversed the settings. Finally, he shut the system down again. "Good as new!"

"Almost," Tegan quipped. "But will she travel?"

"I hope so," the Doctor answered. "Now, let's see to our friends, shall we?"

The Time Lord released the door mechanism, and they returned to the deck of Calypso. Jack held

the door for the others, examining it for some sort of trickery. Finding none, he shook his head in admiration.

Outside, a small group gathered when they saw the Doctor. Captain Cousteau was the first to congratulate him on his success. "Well, Doctor," he said, "you have your machine again. Now, you will leave us?"

Sadly, the Time Lord nodded. "Yes, we must. But not just yet. I'll be happy to answer any questions before we go. Or, perhaps," he turned directly to Cousteau, "give a little demonstration?"

The scientist's weathered face brightened. "I would be most interested to see your ship."

"Anyone else?" asked the Doctor, leading the way into the TARDIS.

Inside, he stood with his hands in his pockets, merrily observing the rapt expressions of the crew as they ran their hands along the walls, poked about the console, and conversed rapidly with each other in French. "Just, please, don't touch the controls," he asked nervously.

After a few minutes, Captain Cousteau joined him. "How is it all possible?" he asked.

"The interior of the TARDIS exists in another dimension. This is only the console room. The ship is much larger." He waved toward the door to the corridor.

"And it travels through time as well as space?"

"Yes. Would you care for a demonstration?"

Cousteau's eyes gleamed as the Time Lord set the coordinates. "And where would you take us, Doctor?"

"To paradise, Captain."

With a flourish, the Time Lord flicked a final switch, setting the time rotor into motion. The TARDIS whirled backward in time. Astonished eyes followed the movement of the rotor; several men glanced at the Doctor with apprehension.

In minutes, the rotor stopped, and the Time Lord worked to complete their short journey.

"We are in hover mode at the moment," he announced, and turned on the view screen. "What you see before you is France, in the Fourteenth Century. B.C.," he added with a grin. "Unspoiled, unpolluted, and, for the most part, unpopulated."

The screen showed a huge expanse of greenery. Dense forest, broken in places by small clearings, stretched before them. The crew stood in wonder, gazing at the screen.

Again, the Doctor worked the controls, landing the TARDIS smoothly in one of the clearings. "Paris, anyone?" He opened the door.

Slowly, the men stepped outside, marvelling at the wildness of the place. Soon, they were exploring, delighting in the sight of plant and animal life not seen in France in centuries.

The Doctor stood with Captain Cousteau in a sunny spot in the clearing.

"I am glad you did not land us in a tree, mon ami."

"Oh," the Doctor shrugged, "the TARDIS did that. She looks out for our safety." He indicated their surroundings. "Well, what do you think?"

"I think I have witnessed a miracle. But we may never see my crew again." He chuckled. "Can this really be France, and so long ago?"

"Time is relative, Captain."

"It is so clean, so fresh. I only wish I could bring it back for the rest of the world to enjoy."

"Or exploit?" The Time Lord shook his head sadly. "We pay the price for our progress."

"To possess such knowledge..." Cousteau turned to him. "Your people, they could stop wars, feed billions, control entire worlds..."

The Doctor scratched his head, embarrassed. "Well, yes, that's true, I suppose. But unfortunately, or fortunately, maybe, the Time Lords don't want that kind of power. We observe, but we must not change. At least, we're not supposed to."

The Frenchman nodded sadly. "I understand. But it must be painful for you to watch, and not be able to change the evil."

Again, the Doctor agreed, remembering the many times he wished he could change the course of history. "It can be, yes, but it can also be wonderful. I've travelled throughout centuries, and seen the sun rise on a thousand worlds. Yet it seems I always come back to Earth."

"Perhaps we are the greatest challenge?"

"Perhaps you are. The human race has a great capacity for compassion. You could make this planet into a paradise again."

"And do we, Doctor? Do we make our world a paradise? Or has all our work been for nothing?"

The Time Lord paused, looking into the other man's keen eyes. I can't lie to him...

"Non." Cousteau looked away. "I can see that we do not."

"Would you like to see for yourself? I can show you your future, just as I have shown you your past."

The scientist shook his head. "Non, Doctor. I have many years of work ahead of me, and I do not wish to know that it is for nothing. I will continue my work as if this conversation never took place."

"If it's any consolation, Captain, your work will not be for nothing. Millions will come to know the oceans, and to appreciate their world and its beauty, as a result of your work. That, alone, will assure Earth's immortality -- if not here, then in space. The knowledge will survive."

Cousteau looked into the Time Lord's candid face. "I envy you, Doctor, with your freedom to travel through time. But I pity you also, for the burden of your knowledge. I would not want such a burden." Patting the Time Lord on the shoulder, he rose and surveyed the clearing. "Perhaps we should go now. I will gather my men." Turning back to the Doctor, he smiled. "Merci, mon ami, for all of this."

The Doctor returned the smile as he watched the Frenchman walk away across the grass. He had met many great men in his long life -- but this was one he would never forget.

* * * * *

Calypso's deck was crowded with improvised tables as the crew of the ship and the travellers from the TARDIS shared one last meal. A happy, relaxed atmosphere permeated the ship -- the contented feeling of a job well done. Those who had dared journey with the Doctor into their homeland's distant past were quieter than the others, pondering the afternoon's experience. Some could not accept it, passing it off as a trick of some sort, but others marvelled at the wonders of the day.

Captain Cousteau had arranged the gathering in honour of his guests. The Time Lord and Nyssa sat at one table, surrounded by the Captain and his family. As they ate, the Doctor produced a two-week-old newspaper from his pocket and waved it under Nyssa's nose.

"We can still make the test matches," he announced. "I hate to be so close and miss all the fun."

"Cricket again, Doctor? I thought, in all the excitement, you'd forgotten."

"What? Forget the Finals? Not likely." He turned his best wounded look on her, making her laugh. It would be good to get back into the routine again, he thought. Carefully, he rolled the paper and thrust it into his inside pocket. "I'll read this later. By the way, where's Tegan?"

"With Jack," Nyssa answered.

Jean-Michel Cousteau cocked an eyebrow. "I think your young friend has taken a fancy to Monsieur Fletcher."

"Yes, so it would seem. Perhaps I should have a little talk with her. Excuse me."

The Doctor wound his way among the joyous crewmen, shaking hands and accepting congratulations all the way.

Tegan sat in the centre of a particularly rowdy group, Jack by her side. In one hand, she held her missing sandal, tied with a blue ribbon.

"Tegan," the Time Lord interrupted, "may I speak to you for a moment?"

"Of course, Doctor." Then, "I'll finish up later, mates," she said to the others as she rose to her feet. Dusting down the seat of her white shorts, she followed the Time Lord. "What is it?"

"Tegan..." He hesitated. "You've been travelling with me for quite a long time now..." He fumbled for the right words.

"Yes?"

"Well, if you'd, uh, like to stay behind this time, I could return you to your own time. I mean, you wouldn't want to remain here, with the chance of meeting yourself..." he finished lamely.

"And, zap, yes, I know." She looked him in the eyes. "Are you asking me if I want to stay with Jack?"

"Well, yes, I imagine that's exactly what I'm asking. I could move him ahead with you..."

She smiled. "I'm fond of Jack, but I'm not in love with him. Not that it's any of your business," she added. "We talked it over, and I want to stay with you. If it's all right, that is."

"Of course, it's all right." He was pleased. "Are you ready to go?"

"In a few minutes."



He smiled and nodded, leaving her to say her goodbyes.

Returning to his seat at the table, the Time Lord gathered up the few keepsakes he had been given -- a photograph of Calypso and her crew, the location map showing where the TARDIS had been found, and his red wool cap. As he motioned for Nyssa to say her farewells, Captain Cousteau lifted his glass. The Doctor sat back down.

"I propose a toast -- to the man who has brought us knowledge from beyond the stars, who has shown us great courage, and who has held out his hand in friendship to our world. We salute you, Doctor!"

As glasses were raised, the Time Lord found himself momentarily speechless. Then, finally, he rose to his feet.

"Thank you, my friends, for believing in our mission, and for giving so much of yourselves to bring it to a successful conclusion. Without you, there would have been no future for us." He raised his own glass to them. "To Captain Cousteau, and the crew of Calypso!"

There were loud cheers in response, and the clinking of glasses.

The toasts continued, giving the Doctor and Nyssa an opportunity to get ready to leave. In the flurry that followed, they were engulfed in handshakes and hugs. Only Tegan and Jack did not join in the general farewells.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Jack asked her.

"Yes, positive."

He nodded, releasing her hand, and began to walk away.

"Jack! I'll miss you!" Her small voice carried over the din, and he returned to take her into his arms.

"I'll miss you, too, Tegan. God knows, I'll miss you."

"Maybe, some day, ten or fifteen years from now... Who knows? I won't be travelling forever..."

"Who knows?" he agreed, smiling. "Good luck to you, and good sailing." He released her again, and walked away.

"Goodbye, Jack," she called after him, then felt, rather than saw, the Doctor behind her.

"Are you ready now?" he asked.

"Yes." Quickly, she went to Captain Cousteau. "Thank you for everything you've done. You've saved his life, all our lives." Tears threatened to break free of her control.

Cousteau smiled gently. "It was time well invested. Goodbye, Tegan." He kissed her hand.

With a last look behind her, she plunged into the TARDIS. Nyssa was close behind.

The party continued as the Doctor and the French explorer stood together before the TARDIS. Then, hands in his pockets, the Time Lord turned and strolled to the rail, Cousteau at his side. A steady wind rippled over the water; the resultant waves distorted the reflection of the moon.

The Frenchman stretched a hand toward the water. "Always the wind," he sighed. "It is eternal. Like Time Lords, perhaps?"

"We're hardly eternal."

"If only we could harness this eternal wind as you have harnessed the power of time. Maybe then, we would have the answer."

The Time Lord looked at him and grinned, his smile lost in the darkness. Silently, he reached into his coat pocket and pulled out the rolled newspaper. Loosening the coil of paper into a cylinder, he handed it to his companion.

"I think you will find your answers, Captain -- or at least one of them. And I know you will never stop trying."

Cousteau took the paper, perplexed. "Each night, I will look up at the stars, but they will never be the same again. Each will become a world you have visited. Merci, Doctor. And bon voyage."

"Thank you, Captain Cousteau. It's been a pleasure."

Shaking hands, the two men parted. With a wave, the Time Lord strode up to the TARDIS and pushed through the door. Over his shoulder, he could see the lone figure of the French scientist, still standing at Calypso's rail. What an amazing man...

* * * * *

Jacques-Yves Cousteau watched, barely moving, as the TARDIS faded into the night, accompanied by a loud grinding noise. He took a deep breath, then turned back to the sea. In his hands, he still held the paper cylinder. Thoughtfully, he leaned against the rail, feeling the tug of the wind on the tube. Then, with a shrug, he rolled the paper tighter and returned to the celebration.



"Tangled In Holly"

(by Linda Ruth Pfonner)

The oak wasn't the oldest in the forest, but it was no sapling, either. The squirrel who had made it his home for the past two summers had no way of guessing the tree's age, nor would he have understood the number, for his perception of numbers was limited. To him, the aged oak was his universe -- home and larder, hunting ground and refuge. The hollow branch on the southeast side provided a cozy nest. The tree's buds and new twigs fed him in spring and summer; its acorns fed him in fall and winter. The myriad branches were a playground, and a field where the squirrel dared his luck against hawks and owls, cats and weasels.

On this particular late-summer afternoon, however, it was too hot for even the usually irrepres-
sible titmice, who huddled in the shade of the old oak. The squirrel sprawled along a branch, legs dangling, chin on the bark, panting in the heat. But he kept some of his attention on the suspi-
cious form below him.

The first major fork of the oak sent a huge limb almost perpendicularly away from the trunk, about three yards above the mossy ground. On it lay the supine figure of a young man.

Dressed in soft leathers and coarse homespun in dark forest colours, the lean body lay on its back, one knee flexed, long dark hair in disarray, right arm hanging limply off the edge of the limb. The man's eyes, framed by long, dark lashes, were closed. His left hand lay across his flat stomach, and if he was breathing, the squirrel couldn't see it.

The little rodent knew the man well; he was a familiar inhabitant of the forest. But the animal kept a watchful eye on the longbow lying on the branch beside the still human figure, and on the quiver of hunting arrows beside it. The bow and arrows constituted a threat. It might not matter that the man didn't move, or even seem to be alive.

"Herrrrrrrrrrnnnnne...!"

The young man's eyes snapped open, although he didn't move. The mating cry of the fallow deer, months out of season -- the rut wasn't until November, and it was only July -- was an alarm, a warning -- and a cry for help.

"Herrrrrrrrrrnnnnne...!"

He who had once been Robin of Loxley got to his feet in one smooth, flowing motion. Who would dare use Herne's Call but one of his sons?

Robin strained his hearing to the utmost, but the Call didn't come again. He leaned against the upright trunk, and tried to remember the voice. Who was it...?

The voice wasn't familiar -- but who could it be, other than one of his own men?

It wasn't Will Scarlet -- Will wouldn't call unless he was at Death's very door, and perhaps not



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even then. And it hadn't sounded like Little John. Nasir still held to his own faith; while he might call for help if he were in dire need, he wasn't likely to use the Call of the Stag.

It definitely was not Much. Robin knew a great relief at that realization, then a flicker of guilt. He was the Black Man, the Son of the Woods. He should show no favouritism. But he was human, too, and Much's quick smile and puppy-like eagerness to please endeared him to the entire band. Besides, he was Robin's foster-brother...

The voice had unquestionably been male, so it wasn't Marion's. That was reassuring. It wasn't impossible for his dear Lady to get herself into serious trouble, but not this time...

He made no conscious decision. He simply dropped down out of the tree, landing lightly on the moss-covered ground. He set off at a steady, ground-eating, wolf-like trot.

He went nearly a full league, and found no trace of anything suspicious. The wildlife seemed somewhat unsettled, and he saw no deer, but that was to be expected; the Cry of the Stag disturbed every living thing in the forest, but especially the deer.

"Herrrrrrrrrrnnnnne...!"

Robin straightened, facing the source of the sound, straining to identify the voice. It was male, and very close, perhaps just over the next rise...

He pushed back his hood and clambered nimbly up the slanted trunk of a fallen elder, hoping to overlook the sight before he went in. A flash of blue drew his eyes, and he turned slightly, frowning with concentration as he tried to identify it.

Something struck him brutally hard in the right thigh. His leg buckled, and he grabbed wildly for support. Twigs and leaves slipped through his fingers, and he fell.

He landed heavily on his right shoulder and rolled down a short slope, coming to a halt sprawled at the bottom of a little gully. He lay very still, trying to catch his breath, while a flame of agony grew in his leg. His hand, fumbling for the source of the pain, came upon a hard wooden shaft. One glance at his leg confirmed it -- a crossbow quarrel was buried more than half its length in his thigh.

Robin's head sagged back exhaustedly, and he closed his eyes. His entire body felt drained of strength; the act of regaining his feet was utterly beyond comprehension.

"I got 'im, m'lord! I did! A youth dressed in leathers! Knocked 'im right off the branch!"

Robin froze. There was a thrashing in the undergrowth nearby -- the man who had spoken, and several of his companions, no doubt, and they were coming closer. They had to be the Sheriff's men. Who else would be out here, using crossbows, hunting men...?

"Where did he fall?" a new voice demanded imperiously. "I saw nothing. If you're lying to me..."

"Damn you, Gisburne..." Robin whispered the curse under his breath. The voice was unmistakably that of Sir Guy of Gisburne -- and Robin couldn't imagine anyone he wanted in the vicinity less than Sir Guy of Gisburne.

"I'm not lying, m'lord! He should've fallen right under there..."

Struck by sudden panic, Robin dragged himself to a sitting position, and desperately looked around for his bow. It lay where he had first struck the ground -- and it was smashed beyond repair. He must have landed on it. That left him with no weapon but his dagger.

Unable to fight, his only recourse was flight; he had to hide some place where the men-at-arms couldn't find him. The odds, he knew, were against Gisburne deigning to get off his horse, but, by the same token, the knight seldom travelled with fewer than a dozen men-at-arms.

His leg wouldn't support his weight. He knew it, and made no attempt to stand. Instead, he crawled, laboriously, dragging himself with his arms, pushing with his uninjured leg. He wormed his way deeper into the undergrowth, hoping he wasn't leaving too much of a trail. The shaft of the bolt kept snagging on the shrubbery, jarring the point deeper into his leg.

His vision blurred by tears of pain, Robin collapsed in a tiny hollow under a deadfall, sure he couldn't be seen by anyone who didn't take the exact route he'd used. He was unaware that the tree thus sheltering him was another elder -- that most unlucky of trees.

* * * * *

"He must have heard the Call, Will. And he could no more ignore it than we can," Little John said patiently. Will Scarlet was a perverse man, who nearly always played the rôle of Devil's Advocate in anything the band did. John was more accustomed to listening while others argued with Will -- but Nasir seldom spoke, and the three of them were alone. Even now, Nasir stood apart, listening for the Call to come again.

"And what if it's a trap?" Will grumbled. "The Old Ways aren't all that secret -- they didn't always need to be! Gisburne or someone else could have discovered the Call..."

"Will, Robin got there first. He must have; he was a lot closer than we are. If it's a trap, he may be in trouble. We've got to go and see. We can't just leave him alone out there."

Will didn't have an instant response. He glanced at Nasir, who returned his gaze impassively. "Do you have an opinion?" he inquired sourly.

There was a long silence while the Saracen studied the Saxon's expression. Finally, he nodded. "Yes."

Will waited, but Nasir turned away to study the forest again.

"Would you be so kind as to share your opinion with us, O mysterious one?" he growled sarcastically.

Slowly, Nasir turned to face him. "It is my belief," he began, choosing his words with extreme care, "that Robin knows, by now, the source of the Call. Whether he has profitted by this knowledge, I cannot know. But we are sworn. We cannot abandon him until we know his fate." His command of the language was excellent, but he spoke cautiously, as if uncertain of it. He preferred not to sound like an uneducated peasant -- even if the men to whom he spoke were uneducated peasants.

Will sighed. Nasir was a foreigner who still followed his own odd faith, worshipping a God called Allah through a divinely appointed spokesman, Mohammed. It sounded too much like the Church to

Will, although the Saracen said it was different. And he also never mentioned any female, which was even more baffling. How could any God exist without a Goddess? Even the Christians knew that -- they had the Virgin and the Magdalen. Herne had the Great Mother, Who was Mother to all that lived and breathed and grew -- including the Horned One Himself.

But that wasn't important, not now.

The important thing was that Nasir was right. Robin was their Man in Black, the Son of Herne in Sherwood. They were sworn to him. They had to answer the Call of the Stag, and they had to discover if Herne's Son really was in trouble.

"You're right," he conceded, sighing again. "And there must be some reason why all three of us think Robin's in trouble."

"C'mon, then!" The matter decided, Little John was instantly impatient for them to be on their way. He didn't wait for any response, but turned and set off at once.

Smiling ruefully, Will followed. Nasir fell in behind -- willing enough, and eager enough, but not smiling. There was nothing to smile about.

* * * * *

Robin huddled in his tiny refuge. He was cold, and sweating, and his right legging was soaked with blood. Nothing he did seemed to slow the blood flowing from the wound. He lay on the rotted leaves, panting, his eyes closed, and listened to the men-at-arms stumbling around in the undergrowth nearby. There was nothing else he could do. He hated acting the part of the wounded doe to Gisburne's wolf pack, but he had no alternative. He had no weapon but a dagger, and his strength was flowing out of him in a thick, red stream, soaking the earth beneath him.

He told himself he didn't mind dying, so long as he did it in the forest. Please, Herne, he prayed silently, just keep Gisburne from finding me alive. The sword -- Albion! -- and the silver arrow are safely hidden. Just keep Gisburne away from me while I'm still breathing... He felt his mind fogging, and let himself relax. It won't be long, now...

* * * * *

Sir Guy of Gisburne tightened his grip on the reins, and his sorrel gelding tensed, striving for a secure footing in the slippery mud, but too constricted by his rider's tight hold on his head to be at all certain of his balance. Inevitably, the horse lost his footing, and slid on his haunches down a small embankment.

Angry, Gisburne jerked the poor, confused beast's head up. Obediently, the sorrel got all four legs under him and made a valiant effort to regain the path. He made it, but not without effectively destroying that portion of the track.

"No one's found the wolf's-head yet?" Gisburne demanded of his men. "If he's wounded, he can't have gone far..."

"Herne protects His own," someone muttered -- just loudly enough for the annoyed young Norman to hear.

"No horned devil can keep anything from honest Christians!" he snapped. He yanked the gelding

around roughly. "He's got to be here, and we're not going back without him. Now, find him!"

Dickon, the sergeant of the squad, sighed heavily. Young Willy had, indeed, knocked someone out of the elder -- and Dickon was very much afraid he knew who it was. He couldn't admit to the Norman lord that he himself was a follower of the Horned Hunter; Gisburne would have him played as a traitor. But how could he betray Herne's Son to the Norman?

Dickon wrung his hands in despair. Willy was a good shot with a crossbow; chances were very good that the Hooded Man was dead. But what if he's not? If he's alive, he's surely badly hurt... Which is worse -- dying alone in Sherwood, or falling, wounded, into Norman hands...?

The decision was taken from him. The men-at-arms had quickly limited their quarry's possible hiding places. An elder had fallen in some long-ago storm, and now lay half-buried in a tangle of holly. Dead or alive, the man Willy had shot was hiding underneath that deadfall. There was no other place for him to be, and if he was there, he had to have been alive -- at least for a time -- just to have crawled into hiding.

The men-at-arms ripped at the undergrowth, trying to uncover their quarry, anxious as young hounds at their first fox earth. All they accomplished was the destruction of the stand of holly and the tearing up of their hands.

"Hold!" Dickon called sharply. The men froze. "You men stand around the edges," he directed them firmly. "I'll go in. If he flushes, he's yours."

The men formed a ragged circle around the thicket. Dickon took a deep breath and dropped to his hands and knees in the soft earth. It took a few moments, but he soon found the opening he knew had to be there, and he crawled into the deadfall.

Very little light filtered through the tangle of weeds and vines and evergreen holly, but there was a smear of blood on a leaf where he put his hand. Dickon knew he had found the track.

A dim shape was barely visible ahead of him, and he squinted, trying to focus on it in the shadows. It didn't look like a human figure at all; it looked more like a wolf sprawled out on the leafy mold. Eyes glowed green in the shadows, and he saw a flash of teeth, and heard a wolfish snarl.

But as his eyes adjusted to the dimness, the shape resolved itself into the form of a dark-haired young man dressed in leathers, with a hood up over his head, and a dagger in his hand. The youth's eyes were shadowed, but the snarl was very real.

Dickon caught his breath in dismay. "The Hooded Man!" he whispered, recognizing Robin from ceremonies he had attended deep in Sherwood. He swallowed hard. Should I kill him here and now, or bring him out to be Gisburne's prisoner? Which is worse...?

Could he kill Robin if th' Hood?

Robin heard the soldier coming, and retreated as far as he could. Wounded he was, and weakened near death, but he was Herne's Son, and he would not tamely submit to being slaughtered by the Normans.

Dickon noticed the odd way the Hooded Man was lying, and realized he was, after all, badly hurt. The younger man's leggings were soaked with blood, and those fierce eyes were glazed with pain and

weakness. The sergeant leaned toward him, to steady him, and jerked back abruptly as Robin slashed at him with his dagger.

"Take it easy, lad," Dickon said quietly. "I just want to see your leg..." He moved closer, talking softly, as he would to a wounded dog or hawk. The young man's defensive determination faded as he moved closer. He twisted the dagger out of Robin's hand, and tucked it into his own belt.

Robin couldn't focus his eyes, and he found it difficult to think. The soldier's voice was soothing, and he had to fight desperately to stay awake. He knew he was surrounded by foes, and if he relaxed, he would surely be killed.

"Be easy, lad. Herne takes care of His own."

Robin blinked, startled. He must be dreaming! His father had been dead for a very long time...

But then, if he was dying, perhaps Allric of Loxley had indeed returned to accompany his son across the Abyss. Such things weren't unheard of...

He tried to sit up, to get a better look at the man bending over him, and jarred the crossbow quarrel in his leg. This time, the pain swept up into his head, and exploded behind his eyes. The blinding light faded into darkness, and the world darkened with it.

Dickon caught him as he collapsed, and cradled the slim body against his own for a moment.

"Well? Well? Have you found him yet?" Gisburne's petulance sounded even more childish when compared to the dark youth's savage courage.

But the sergeant was as trapped as young Robin, and knew it. "Here, m'lord," he called, unable to hide the regret in his voice. "I have him. Willy, give me a hand with the lad -- he's passed out."

The youth in leather was a dead weight in their arms, and it took both Willy and Mark, a second man-at-arms, to drag him clear of the thicket. They laid him on a flat piece of ground nearby while Dickon climbed out. Gisburne dismounted and went to stand over the motionless body.

"So, wolf's-head, you thought your silly forest god would protect you..." He kicked the outlaw's body, and nearly lost his balance as his other foot slipped in the mud. He had to grab at a tree trunk for support, and several of his men-at-arms turned away to hide their grins.

"M'lord, we need to do something about that bolt in his leg, or he won't live to be taken back," Dickon spoke up quickly. "You said you wanted him alive, to be shown to the Sheriff..."

For a moment, Gisburne wavered, torn between gloating over his victory and anticipating the triumph of presenting a living prisoner to the Sheriff before an admiring crowd in Nottingham. "Very well," he said finally. "Do what you can for him. And build a litter to carry him back." He swung back into his saddle and guided the muddy gelding back toward drier ground.

"Aye, m'lord..."

* * * * *

It was some time later when Little John, Will Scarlet, and Nasir found the site of the ambush.

"I smell blood," John announced, stopping in his tracks.

Will and Nasir stopped, too. It didn't take long for them to find the trail Robin had left as he crawled for cover. The message on the ground was plain to their experienced eyes. Little John tore the deadfall to pieces in a burst of frustrated rage, just to be certain Robin wasn't still lying within it. Then he stood amidst the wreckage, panting.

"He was hurt, but they bound up his wound," Will said slowly. "See, here's a patch of moss they raided for bandaging."

Nasir joined them, holding Robin's smashed bow. He didn't speak, but merely handed it to John.

The big man accepted it silently, a terrible expression on his face. He had made that bow for Robin, and of the entire band, only Little John and Robin himself had been able to string it. It had been John's Mid-Summer gift to his leader and friend.

Will swallowed hard, and had to turn away from the naked grief on John's face. "They carried him away on a litter," he said quietly.

John shuddered, and his grip on the smashed bow tightened. "He's bad, then," he stated, his tone flat.

"Aye, likely he is," Will had to admit, although the thought of Robin, wounded and alone, in Norman hands, chilled his very soul. "If he wasn't, they'd never have caught him. You know that."

John climbed out of the deadfall and collapsed on the ground beside it. "Who caught him? The Sheriff's away, and the Abbot only hunts swans."

"Guy of Gisburne."

John glared at Nasir. "That young Norman ass couldn't find his balls with a torch to light the way!" he growled.

In response, the Saracen held out his hand. Vivid against the black leather glove was a twist of mud-stained hair torn from a horse's tail. It was pale gold in colour.

"Gisburne bought a new horse at the July fair," Will said with a nod. "A big, flashy blond sorrel with no more sense than an addled hen."

John took the twist of hair and studied it for a long moment. Then his shoulders slumped. "It must be..."

Will swallowed hard. He hadn't seen Little John so heartsick since the battle at Simon de Belleme's castle, where so many friends, old and new, had died. He found it rather unnerved him to see the indomitable John so crushed. "At least we know where to go look for him..." he offered softly, trying to hearten his friend.

For a long moment, John didn't move, and Will glanced worriedly at Nasir. Then the big man stood up. He didn't speak to either of his companions, but drew himself up to his full height, raised

his face to the overcast sky, and screamed.

"Herrrrrrrrrrnnnnne...!"

A league away, a sorrel gelding shied and tried to buck as the Call echoed through the forest. The dozen men-at-arms who followed, taking turns carrying a litter with its dying burden, bunched a little closer together, and a few cast nervous glances at the darkening forest.

* * * * *

Marion of Leaford leaned against a tree trunk, her eyes closed, trying very hard not to betray the terror she felt. Something had happened to Robin; of that, she was certain. She had heard the Call, and felt his pain and fear as if they were her own.

But there was no point in losing her self-control. Whatever had happened was already done. All she and the rest of the band could do was wait. They couldn't plan until they knew what had actually happened, and they couldn't know that until Robin came back.

Much was tending the fire. He came out of the forest with an armload of wood, and dropped it into the pile he had already amassed. He settled down to feed the flames, leaning against the same tree that sheltered Marion. Wrapped in her thoughts, she didn't see the three scouts return.

But Much did. "Little John!" he called, standing up and grinning in delight.

John didn't reply, or even look at his young friend. He walked toward Marion, his shoulders slumped, his face a mask of hard-held grief.

She looked up at him, and her face went deathly pale. She didn't even see Will Scarlet or Nasir standing at the edge of the clearing. Much's grin faded, and the other members of the band fell silent, waiting, dreading the news.

The big man stopped a stride in front of Marion, who stared up into his face. "John?" she whispered, her throat dry as chalk.

He dropped to his knees before her, and couldn't meet her eyes. He had to swallow several times before he could force his voice to function. "Robin..."

Her heart froze in her breast.

"He...he's taken, Marion..."

For a long, long moment, there was no sound in the outlaw camp. Then Friar Tuck sighed noisily and crossed himself.

"Praises be! He lives, then? The Call we heard was not a death knell?"

Everyone relaxed just a little, and Marion started to breathe again.

"No, he lives." Will stepped forward into the clearing. His step was heavy, his eyes hard. "But he's hurt, and Guy of Gisburne had him carried by litter to Nottingham."

"Gisburne?" Marion whispered. "Gisburne has him? How?"



John and Will told her their guesses about what had taken place, and John showed her the remnants of Robin's smashed bow.

"So," Will concluded, "he's hurt, and badly, but he's probably still alive. And the Normans have him."

That horror was enough to silence them all, and it was several minutes before Much savagely threw a chunk of firewood at a tree. The faggot shattered, and they all jumped.

"Much...!" Marion was shocked at his unaccustomed violence.

"I wish we had an army of our own," he growled, carefully not looking at her. "I wish we could sack Nottingham, and be rid of the Sheriff forever!"

"No."

For a moment, they were all startled; Nasir seldom participated in their debates. Then John, frowning, spoke up.

"Why not? If it weren't for the Sheriff, we wouldn't be outlaws."

"Your king would send another, with a bigger army," the Saracen pointed out quietly. "All that would be accomplished would be the destruction of Sherwood, and the needless deaths of many men." He turned his lambent gaze on Much, who quailed. "And do not speak so lightly of sacking a town. It is an ugly business, and no honest man enjoys it."

Properly chastened, Much nodded. As soon as Nasir looked away, he took refuge close beside Marion.

Tuck nodded approvingly. "You are wise, indeed, Nasir. Who would have suspected it?"

The Saracen recognized the rillery in the friar's tone, and so took no offence. He looked over his leather-clad shoulder at Tuck for a moment, then went to the fire and pushed some loose soil over it with his boot, putting out the flames. He pitched away the larger pieces of wood, then finally covered the scorched earth with fresh green sod saved from when they dug the firepit. One good rain, and there would be no sign of their campsite.

"C'mon." Will swung his arm. "Let's go."

The rest of the band fell in behind him.

(To Be Concluded...)

"Tangled in Holly," written by Linda Ruth Pfonner, will appear in its entirety in THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER #4. See "News, Views, and Comments" for more information on this, and on a challenge to our readers and to all ROBIN HOOD fans from Linda Pfonner and the staff of OSIRIS Publications.



* LETTERS OF COMMENT *

From Jeannie Webster of Woodlawn, New York [our first real Letter of Comment!]:

The copy of THE SONIC SCREWDRIER Deanna gave me for my birthday was an absolute delight. Of course, I expected high quality from OSIRIS, but you also managed to get a nicely diverse collection of stories. [We try...] Quite frankly, I hadn't known that TSS was including anything but DOCTOR WHO. [We're trying to get the word to everyone. Honest!] I like WHO, and watch the shows fairly regularly. However, time and finances will only stretch to cover a limited number of fandoms. This prevents me from becoming too involved in a new fandom unless it bodily attacks me in some way (which is how I got involved in B7). [Okay, so now you're involved, when do we get a submission from you...?]

I haven't seen much of the first Doctor, but "Eyes Looking Up to Heaven" struck me as a good representation of that Doctor. Barbara Mater did a great deal of research on the time, and it shows. Better yet, she wove it into her story skillfully, without beating the reader on the head with it. (It may seem simple to someone who's never tried it, but it's not. We've all seen writers who devote page upon page to letting the reader in on every single piece of research they ever discovered on the given time period. Very annoying.) The Easter Island theory is a good one. I'm not sure off-hand, but is this one of the mainstream theories, or is it an opinion of the author? [We're not sure ourselves. Maybe we can get Barbara to tell us.]

Karen River's tribute to Pat Troughton was lovely. Absolutely gorgeous. [We thought it was pretty nice, too. We're all going to miss him.]

"Dr. Who and the Master of the Third Reich" was a nicely complicated, well constructed story. Again, extensive historical research and careful reasoning show. Mass hypnosis to explain Hitler's charisma, mind control explaining his talents as a public speaker, and the Doctor's contact with Oppenheimer were all excellent touches. The Master's reasoning for becoming "Der Fuhrer" reminds me very much of those of John Gill in the STAR TREK episode "Patterns of Force" -- attempting to solve the "turmoil" of a so-called primitive society by bringing "order" in an attempt to unify it. [Amen.]

"Merry Christmas, Brigadier" was a cute, well done warm fuzzy. The Doctor of Christmas past, huh? [And why not? We liked it, too.]

Now on to the BLAKE'S 7 novella (?) "Touch of Giving." Excellent character study, with all the characters right on the mark. In addition, it's a well plotted view of what might have happened after Gauda Prime. It was the little touches, however, that really grabbed the reader. The Blake whom Avon shot being a clone is the best example, but Vila's shooting Servalan and the healing cave being a twin to Dorian's are also good. All together, a fine job. [This one was special for us -- our first B7 story. Kathy's got a real talent, and we hope to be able to print lots more of her work.]

The artwork in the zine was consistently excellent, but then, look at who you have as staff artists! [What can we say? We blush on the artists' behalf...]

And from Barbara Mater of Newark, New York, who writes such fine DOCTOR WHO stories herself:

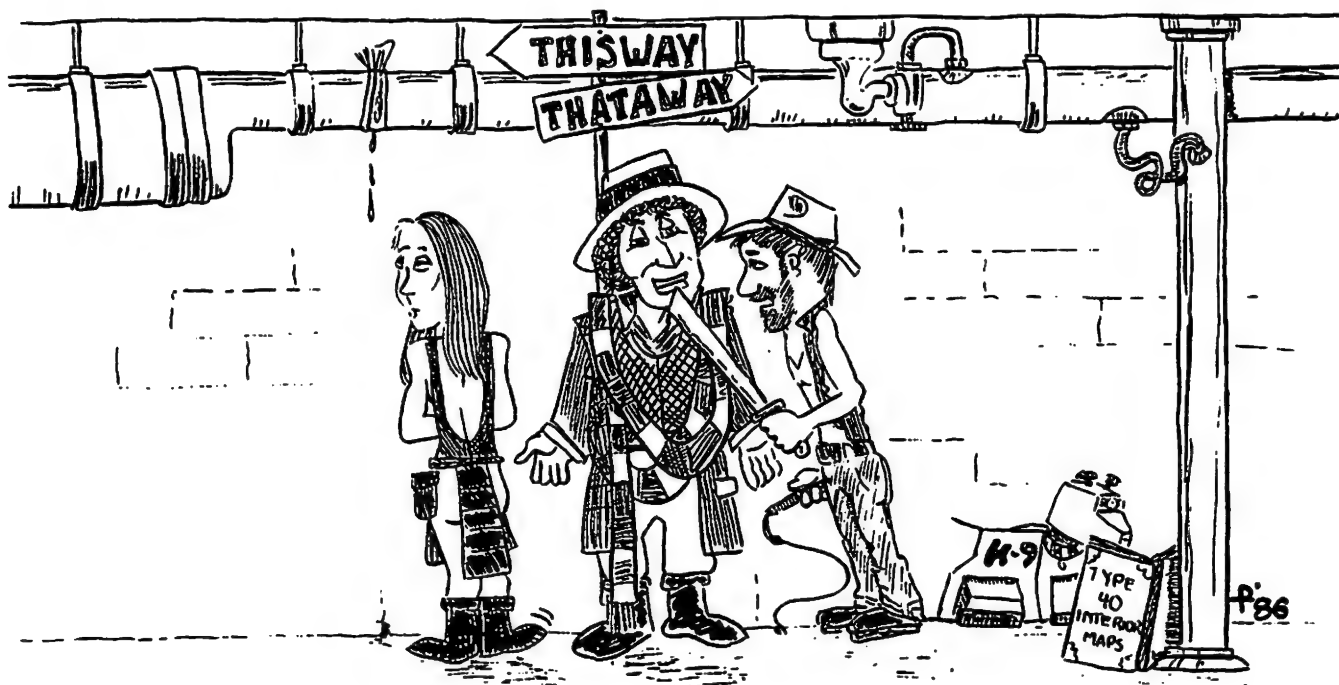
SONIC SCREWDRIVER #2 arrived in my mail today. I want to congratulate you on the excellence of this issue! It's really an impressive job. Just goes to show that the profit motive is not the only reason for doing one's best! [Unfortunately, as we all know, there are some fans doing this sort of thing for money, which is something the studios frown upon.]

Although I've never met Toni Hardeman, I'd like to have you convey my compliments on the illus that accompany my story, "Eyes Looking Up to Heaven." I'm absolutely thrilled with Page 5. It would make a nice book cover... [We like it a lot, too -- and the story it serves to illustrate!]

Stories by Gadzikowski, Hughes, and Hintze are very good. I am not really familiar with BLAKE'S 7, having seen only one and a half episodes, but it's nice to have a variety of F&SF [That's fantasy and science fiction, for anyone who doesn't know...] worlds represented in the zine. That seems to be a trend lately with fans around these parts, too, and I think it's a good one. Not that I'm tired of DOCTOR WHO, but there's so much other good stuff out there, too! [We wholeheartedly agree. Confining a publication to only one subject is far too limiting these days, given the wealth of really good material around.]

So you're doing an all-originals zine, too, hmm? This is very interesting... [Glad you think so, too. Let's hope a lot of other fans agree, and submit lots of good stories for IMAGINATION...]

And now, we invite all our readers to let us know what they think of THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER. Send your Letters of Comment to us at OSIRIS Publications; we will print them, even if they are negative in tone. After all, how can we please you if you don't let us know what you like and want?



NEWS, VIEWS, AND COMMENTS...

These pages mark the end of the third issue of THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER. Issue #4 of our fanzine will be published approximately one year from now, in time for Scorpio VI in August of 1988. But before we leave the realm of British media for another twelve months, we want to express our special thanks to a number of people who have done so much to make this fanzine possible.

First of all, our wonderful writers, for what publication can exist without them?

Mary Robertson's "Soap Opera" is the first piece of humour submitted to THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER. Its very plausibility makes it even funnier. And her "Mourning Is a Long Time Coming" provides some remarkable insights into some remarkable people. She has promised more in the future.

Barbara Mater has scored again with "Darkly Dreaming," her tribute to the sixth incarnation of Doctor Who. We wonder if she'll bring the Master back again for Doctor #7. Her fine series of DOCTOR WHO stories will continue in THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER #4.

We have known Marcia Brin for many years. Her fannish interests are so widely varied that we wonder how she can keep track of them, let alone write such delightful stories. Her "Turning Point" is one of the best character studies we have ever encountered, and does an excellent job of explaining so much about the nature of a complex human being. Marcia, too, will be back again.

In writing "Test Match," Kathie Hughes has done an excellent job of mingling modern science with science fiction (which is what science fiction is supposed to be all about, anyway!). Her portrayal of Jacques-Yves Cousteau and the crew of Calypso brought back many happy memories. Here is a writer who truly knows how to research her work, and we are proud to have been able to publish it.

And Linda Pfonner, who once described herself as "a charter member of the Trash Han Solo Writers Association," has proven she can "trash" just about anyone -- but only with good literary reason. THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER #4 will contain the complete "Tangled in Holly," the first in a projected series presenting a mystical view of Robin of Sherwood. Linda apologises for leaving our readers with a badly wounded Robin held captive by Guy of Gisburne, presumably lying in a dungeon somewhere in Nottingham Castle, bleeding to death. She claims "circumstances beyond my control," but we suspect it might more properly be termed "trashing" the readers.

In any event, we want to make amends, and to do so offer this challenge: Complete "Tangled in Holly" -- your own version of what happens. We will print the best story along with Linda's in THE SONIC SCREWDRIIVER #4, and will provide a special award for the winner of this unusual contest. Linda herself will join our editorial staff in judging the stories, although she will not be allowed to see any entries until her own version is in our possession. We invite all ROBIN HOOD fans to try their hand at saving Herne's son from certain death, and his followers from certain disaster.

We want to express our special thanks for all these delightful stories. We hope our readers enjoyed them as much as we did, and we look forward to being able to present far more from these, and other, talented writers.

And how can we even begin to thank our artists?

We only met briefly -- once -- with Toni Hardeman, but liked both her and her work at first sight. Once again, she has rewarded our faith by providing several excellent illustrations.

Karen River has been a friend and colleague for many years, and is a lovely person as well as one of the most talented individuals we know. Her "Artist's View" of ROBIN HOOD, which has been reproduced in a manner suitable for framing, is truly something to treasure.

And Joan hanke-woods (who claims to be insulted if her name appears with upper-case letters!) is a dear friend of long standing, who is far better known outside of media fandom these days. She won her first Hugo (Best Fan Artist) at the 1986 World Science Fiction Convention; we are certain it won't be her last -- just as we are certain media fans will come to love her art as much as non-media fandom already does.

Many, many thanks to all these fine artists, as well as to our writers. They are what made this fanzine such a delight to see, and to read.

Mary Greeley and Andrea Idelman are new to our staff, but we think you will find them far more than merely competent proofreaders. We thank them, too, as well as Paul Gadzikowski, our DOCTOR WHO Continuity Consultant and designer of the art that precedes our editorials; Lisa Golladay, our Humour Editor (and occasionally the Editor's Editor, when we can find the time for writing); David Morgan, special in many ways; Lisa Mudano, a new-found friend and colleague from whom we will be seeing a great deal of work in the future; and Catherine FitzSimmons, our Legal Advisor and another new friend. They are the ones who regularly make sure we don't slip up too often.

And we mustn't forget to thank Frank Lilitz, a truly lovely man for whom the word "class" might have been coined, for his magnificent logo. We hope his art will grace our pages again soon.

And, lastly, we want to extend our special thanks to several people, who have taught us so much in the past about such things as friendship and trust, about fair dealing, about fandom itself, and about the fannish experience... Barbara Fister-Lilitz, Nancy Kolar, Sharon Monroe, J.D. Rich, Cherry Steffey -- we acknowledge our debts to each of you, and sincerely thank you for lessons well taught. We trust we have learned them equally well.

But we mustn't forget our readers, either, for without you, no publication could exist. Our thanks to you, too. We hope we have entertained you. We hope we have made you laugh, and cry, and think a bit, as well... And we hope you will be back with us again next year. We look forward to meeting each of you some day at a convention somewhere -- or at least through the mail. Why not write, and tell us what you think about our efforts on your behalf?

BLAKE'S 7 has begun to appear on public television in more and more cities across the United States. ROBIN HOOD remains in limbo, although we hope not for long. And the seventh incarnation of DOCTOR WHO, as portrayed by Sylvester McCoy, will appear on American television screens before we join our readers again. We will be back next year, with more BLAKE'S 7, DOCTOR WHO, and ROBIN HOOD stories and art, and perhaps other things as well. Until then,

May Herne protect you.



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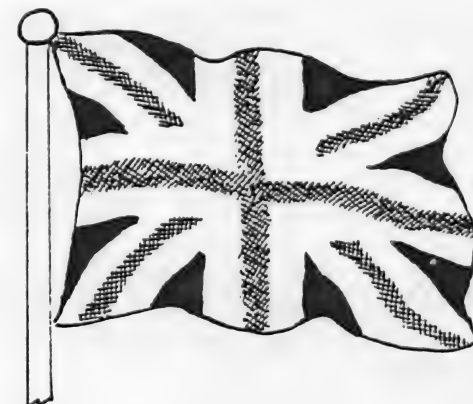
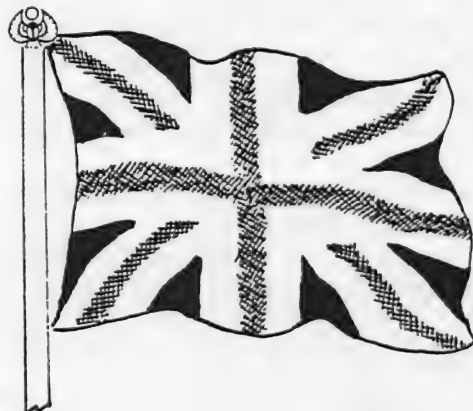
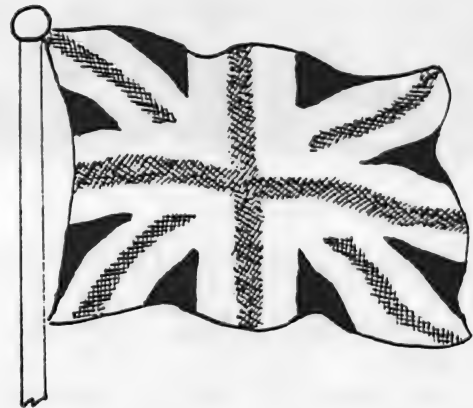
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